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U.S. Leadership Perceptions of the Soviet Problem Since 1945

John Van Oudenaren

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U.S. Leadership Perceptions of the Soviet Problem Since 1945

John Van Oudenaren

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PREFACE

This study is one product of Rand's research for the Director of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, on the long-term competition between the United States and the Soviet Union.

No issue has had greater importance or been surrounded with greater controversy in America's post-World War II foreign relations than U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union. The nature of the Soviet state, its international behavior, and an appropriate set of policies for dealing with the USSR have been subjects of intensive research and heated political debate for more than three decades.

In the early 1980s, we seem no closer to achieving a national consensus on these issues; indeed, there is probably greater division of opinion than ever about whether some form of accommodation—"détente"—with the Soviet Union is possible, whether arms control measures—as opposed to military capabilities—are of value in mediating the global competition between the United States and the USSR, and whether Soviet internal problems will constrain Moscow's aggressive international behavior or spur it on. There does seem to be a strong national recognition, however, that "the Soviet problem" will not go away. The hopes of earlier decades that some form of accommodation could eventually be reached between Washington and Moscow have faded in the face of a continuing Soviet military buildup and persistent efforts to expand the influence of the USSR by military means—particularly in the politically unstable Third World.

It is in this context that Rand has undertaken a research effort, on behalf of the Director of Net Assessment, to assess U.S. policy approaches to managing the long-term competitive relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. The present analysis of American leadership views of U.S.-Soviet relations by John Van Oudenaren should be read in parallel with the companion Rand study by Harry Gelman, which describes the Soviet Politburo's view of its dealings with the United States, *The Politburo's Management of Its America Problem* (R-2707-NA). In the contrast of these two studies, we see clearly both the continuing divergence of opinion within the United States about how to deal with the Soviet Union, and the fact that while the United States and the USSR are living "in the same ballpark" they are playing very different games—pursuing fundamentally conflicting objectives and casting their policies by very different assumptions about international relations.

These two baseline analyses will be supplemented by additional studies of Soviet approaches to dealing with the United States, and American alternatives in formulating a Soviet policy. The ultimate objective of this project is to sharpen for the policymaking community the contrasts in Soviet and American approaches to their dealings with each other, and to suggest more effective U.S. alternatives toward managing the continuing competition between the two super-powers.

Richard H. Solomon, Director
International Security Policy Research
The Rand Corporation
March 1982

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SUMMARY

Among the U.S. political elite today, there exists no consensus on policy toward the Soviet Union. The failure to develop such a consensus reflects a deeper lack of agreement on the nature of the Soviet system, its capacity for change, and the probable course of future U.S.-Soviet rivalry. In recent years, this lack of consensus has been evident in the debates on policy toward the Soviet Union that have raged between (and within) the political parties and in some cases within a single administration, as in the frequent disagreements between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski during the Carter years.

To a large extent, the terms of the current debate on the Soviet Union were set as early as the late forties and early fifties, when U.S. policymakers first shifted their attention from Japan and Germany toward the Soviet Union as the central concern of U.S. foreign and defense policy. In their efforts to understand the post-1945 world and the roles of the United States and USSR, it was understandable that U.S. leaders continued to view international relations through the perspective of the past. For this reason, American leaders generally expected a near-term resolution to the conflicts that had arisen between the United States and the Soviet Union. Either the wartime cooperation between the two sides would continue, thereby assuring an unprecedented era of peace, or it would break down, in which case a third world war was likely, perhaps inevitable. For a time, these views coexisted within the Truman administration.

While various individuals debated the likelihood of these two alternative courses, a small minority of Americans specializing in U.S.-Soviet relations questioned the view that there would be a resolution, at least in the short term, of the problems between the United States and the Soviet Union. These individuals, the most noteworthy of whom was George Kennan, predicted a long and ambiguous period of rivalry between the two powers—what later came to be called the "cold war." In Kennan's view, ambiguity was a more likely possibility than either the postwar harmony that Roosevelt and his advisers had hoped for, or the major war that officials in the Truman administration later came to expect.

Early in the postwar period, three alternative views concerning the future course of U.S.-Soviet relations took shape, and all were represented by prominent individuals within the U.S. government. Not

surprisingly, different policy recommendations flowed from each of these views. For those who believed in the possibility of a peaceful resolution of U.S.-Soviet differences, the objectives of policy focused on reducing Soviet mistrust and perfecting the mechanisms—bilateral and multilateral—for achieving U.S.-Soviet harmony. The ultimate goal of these policies was to bring about a termination of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry by accommodation. Those who believed that the U.S.-Soviet rivalry was likely to lead to war, on the other hand, called for efforts to prepare for the showdown that was to come, both by strengthening the United States and its allies, and weakening, in so far as was possible, the Soviet Union and its allies. Their objective was to achieve a termination of the rivalry by victory, or, at a minimum, to prevent the USSR from achieving such a victory over the United States.

In contrast with these two views, Kennan, and others who believed that no such clear-cut resolution of the U.S.-Soviet relationship was likely, argued that the objective of U.S. policy would have to be more modest. It would have to aim at managing a long period of rivalry with the Soviet Union, without being distracted by hopes for an accommodation, or fears about a war leading to victory for one side or the other. At the same time, Kennan argued that if the Soviet Union were "contained" by the United States and prevented from achieving external successes, it would gradually mellow and cease to be the threat it was in the immediate postwar period.

These three alternative views on U.S.-Soviet relations—termination by accommodation, termination by victory, and long-term management—coexisted in the early postwar period. Around each of them there tended to cluster distinct perspectives on specific aspects of U.S.-Soviet relations: those who believed in termination by victory had one view of East-West trade (or summitry, arms control, etc.); those who believed in termination by victory had another; and those who expected a long-term rivalry still a third.

As the fifties progressed, it became clear that George Kennan's interpretation came closest to describing reality. Although by this time Kennan himself had ceased to be a major figure within the U.S. government, officials gradually accepted his view that no quick resolution of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry was likely. The reasons for this were many. With the onset of the cold war, termination by accommodation all but died out as a possibility, leaving only termination by victory as a serious contender. As the Soviet Union acquired nuclear weapons and gradually consolidated its grip on Eastern Europe, it became increasingly evident that the nuclear era would be one of stalemate. At the same time, the death of Stalin and the domestic "thaw" that followed encouraged American leaders to believe that the Soviet Union

might indeed be "mellowing"—if only slowly—as Kennan had predicted, and that war between the two countries was becoming less probable.

Although by the mid-fifties long-term management predominates over the two termination views of U.S.-Soviet rivalry, it does so without producing a new consensus on policy among U.S. leaders. Individuals and parties, government and opposition continue to debate the nature of the Soviet system, the likely future course of Soviet actions, and the proper policy for the United States to adopt. Although almost no one now openly advocates termination, elements of the earlier termination schools of thought continue to exercise an influence on U.S. thinking as the long-term management approach incorporates, with modifications, many of the earlier views that had been associated with the termination theories. The result is a cleavage within the management school between hard and soft views, with the "hard" managers adopting many of the views of the earlier termination by victory thinkers, and the "soft" managers taking up elements of the termination by accommodation school of thought.

Despite the fact that long-term management is generally accepted by those responsible for U.S. foreign policy, termination by victory and termination by accommodation continue to exert an appeal with the American public and with some political leaders. The very nature of U.S.-Soviet rivalry, with its ups and downs, its numerous crises, leads the public to ask "who's winning" and to wonder whether a victory for one side or the other might be in sight. Similarly, the character of public debate in the United States, particularly during presidential campaigns, often leads candidates to make promises about major changes in the U.S.-Soviet relationship. In making their promises, candidates often echo elements of the earlier termination by accommodation and termination by victory approaches to dealing with the Soviet Union. For the policymaker, however, the rhetoric of termination is at best irrelevant and at worst a distraction from the day-to-day task of managing the ongoing rivalry with the Soviet Union.

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I. INTRODUCTION

For 35 years the Soviet Union has presented American political leaders with their most pressing foreign policy problem. Throughout this period, the Soviet Union, like other countries, has undergone constant change. Although this change has worked to reshape the perceptions of American leaders, it has not ended an ongoing debate in the United States about the "essential" character of the Soviet system. This in turn has made consensus on a long-term strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union difficult to achieve.

Many of the basic questions about the objectives and motivations of the Soviet leaders that are asked today are essentially similar to the ones that have been asked since the inception of U.S.-Soviet rivalry: To what extent is Soviet policy "defensive" and aimed mainly at preserving the Soviet system, or "offensive" and ultimately geared toward world domination? To what extent is it driven by Russia's traditional interests as a great power, and to what extent by Marxist-Leninist ideology? Are Soviet actions taken as part of a coherent overall strategy, or mainly through ad hoc responses to what are perceived as threats (in the defensive interpretation) or opportunities (in the offensive view)? Is policy the product of a unanimous internal Politburo consensus, or is it hotly contested by "hawk" and "dove" or other such factions? If so, to what extent can the relative strengths of these factions be influenced by outside and particularly U.S. actions? Finally, if the Russian national experience is relevant to Soviet behavior, just what is this experience—technological backwardness and repeated exposure to foreign invasion, or uninterrupted territorial expansion? If both aspects of this experience are relevant, how do they interact with each other and what are the implications for the United States?

Debate on these fundamental questions had already begun during the Second World War, as postwar relations with the Soviet Union gradually supplanted the war effort as the central concern of U.S. foreign and defense policy. As the defeat of Germany drew near, military and civilian leaders were anxious to secure Soviet help in what they thought would be a long and bloody struggle with Japan. Looking beyond the war, these same leaders realized that of the major powers the United States and the USSR would alone emerge strengthened, and that future prospects for peace would probably depend in large part on the relationship between these two powers.

The years 1945-1946 witnessed a vigorous debate within the U.S. government on the course that this relationship would take. Understandably, officials reviewed the events of the recent past in the hope that they could avoid the kind of mistakes that had led to World War II. Roosevelt feared that the United States would again lapse into isolationism and abdicate responsibility for events in Europe. Determined to prevent a recurrence of this stance, he proposed a strong United Nations organization built around U.S. and Soviet (and British) cooperation. For other leaders, the important lessons of the past were to be found not in Versailles and its failures but in the events at Munich and the appeasement that had preceded the Nazi attack on Poland. John Foster Dulles, at that time a leading Republican spokesman and an adviser to the Truman administration, compared Stalin's *Problems of Leninism* with *Mein Kampf*, and warned that Western statesmen were again ignoring a plan of action set forth by an aggressive dictator. By late 1945, Truman's Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, predicted that the implacable nature of the Soviet system could only impel it into war with the United States. The belief that either the United States or the Soviet Union had to win this rivalry—that there was no middle course—understandably led to a search for an effective U.S. strategy for achieving victory. Various attempts at formulating such a strategy were undertaken in the late forties, culminating in 1950 with the completion of the National Security Council study, which has come to be known as NSC 68.

Thus, in the early postwar period, U.S. elite perceptions quickly became polarized on the question of the outcome of rival U.S. and Soviet efforts to shape the postwar order. One group, associated with the Roosevelt administration and those Roosevelt advisers—Harry Hopkins, Cordell Hull, and Henry Wallace—who retained some influence after the President's death, saw the possibility of a "termination by accommodation" of U.S.-Soviet differences. A second group, meanwhile, emerged that saw the likelihood—if not the inevitability—of this rivalry leading to a "termination by victory" for one side or the other. In late 1945 and early 1946, both these views coexisted within the Truman administration, with Truman himself not yet clearly committed to one view or the other.

At the same time that termination by accommodation and termination by victory took shape as major alternative views on the outcome of U.S.-Soviet rivalry, a third view emerged that challenged altogether the notion that the U.S.-Soviet relationship was apt to lead, at least in the short run, to either an accommodation such as Roosevelt envisioned or to the kind of showdown that Forrestal and others had come to expect. The leading exponent of this view was George Kennan, at one time a political officer in the U.S. embassy in Moscow, and

subsequently the head of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department. In Kennan's view, there would not be a clear-cut outcome in the postwar period but rather a long and ambiguous period of U.S.-Soviet rivalry. He argued that a realistic policy for the United States would be one that concerned itself not with seeking an accommodation with the USSR, which he saw as unattainable, and not with preparations for a military showdown, which he saw as unlikely, but rather that focused on the problems of managing a long-term rivalry with a hostile power.¹

By the mid- to late fifties, much of Kennan's skepticism about either form of termination had come to be widely shared in the U.S. foreign policy elite, as the Soviet Union proved neither as ready for war as pessimists had feared, nor as accommodating as optimists had hoped. The death of Stalin in 1953 removed what many in the West had come to see as a source of intense hostility toward the outside world, thereby opening up possibilities for change within the Soviet system. Such changes became more evident as Khrushchev launched his domestic "thaw" and made his opening to the West at Geneva. At the same time, the Soviet attainment of nuclear weapons and the gradual buildup of Soviet military power convinced American leaders that the nuclear era would be one of stalemate, with the prospect of victory for either side extremely remote.

The general acceptance of the view that there would be no early resolution of the Soviet problem did not, however, result in an end to dissension within the U.S. foreign policy elite. As U.S. leaders aligned in their roles as "managers," controversy erupted on the question of what constituted a proper management strategy. Indeed, as the management school broadened to encompass almost all the U.S. foreign policy elite, it tended to absorb many of the views formerly held by accommodators and victory-seekers of the earlier period. The net result was the development of a split within the management approach between "hard" and "soft" camps, with the hard managers appropriating many of the old termination by victory beliefs, and the soft managers appropriating elements of earlier termination by accommodation thinking.

In an effort to probe the roots of the ongoing dissension in the U.S.

¹In the final analysis, Kennan was also a "terminator," because he believed that if the Soviet Union's external expansion were "contained" by the United States, the Soviets would mellow over time and gradually cease to be a threat. However, he attributed this mellowing to indigenous forces in the Soviet Union rather than to any direct or immediate effect that specific U.S. policy actions might have on the Soviet system. Moreover, he was careful to stress that transformation of the USSR would be a slow, long-term process, and that the expectation of change did not eliminate the need for a policy of containment.

foreign policy community, this report will analyze the three early postwar alternatives—termination by accommodation, termination by victory, and long-term management—and show how the early debates on these alternatives influenced later American thinking. In addition, the report will suggest some of the underlying reasons *why* termination appealed to those who were confronted for the first time with the Soviet problem, and why, despite the standoff of the past 35 years, termination continues to exert a residual appeal with elites and with the general public.

Because the idea of terminating the U.S.-Soviet rivalry is so attractive to the public—or, alternatively, because the specter of a termination in favor of the USSR is so frightening—candidates for public office have often been tempted to speak of termination as a realizable possibility. As will be seen, however, in doing so they often raise unwarranted hopes and fears in the general public and distract attention from the immediate task of managing the U.S.-Soviet rivalry.

II. TERMINATION BY ACCOMMODATION

THE APPEAL

The prospect of endless conflict with the Soviet Union has never been an attractive one for American political leaders. As outlined in the previous section, while the position of the United States in the international system and the growth of Soviet power dictated a policy of conflict management, various factors have made the prospect of "termination" particularly appealing to both leaders and the general public. Three kinds of influences stand out:

1. American political culture.
2. Competing demands of domestic politics.
3. An unusually favorable international environment.

Throughout his long career as a scholar, Hans Morgenthau often remarked on the connection between American political culture and the American approach to international relations. He noted that for individuals nurtured in a political and business tradition of compromise, of "live and let live," the idea that a foreign power could sustain a permanent hostility toward the United States has often been incomprehensible. He stressed that the United States had been formed on an empty continent by a conscious act of political will. Not having had to fight its way against competing politics at home or abroad, it had never learned the limitations that other countries felt instinctively. Its leaders, particularly Presidents Wilson and Roosevelt, had viewed the world as an extension of the American *tabula rasa*—one upon which a utopian future could be built irrespective of the problems of the past.

Morgenthau noted the role that law played in the American consciousness, and how American presidents and secretaries of state had often viewed the problems of international relations in terms of developing and enforcing a body of international law. He saw the moral strain in American life and the American special sense of mission as leading, alternatively, to a universal global involvement or to an isolationist shunning of the evils of the outside world. Above all, Morgenthau saw a reluctance on the part of American leaders to perceive political struggle and the maintenance of the balance of power as the norm—the very essence of foreign policy—rather than a temporary aberration brought about by the appearance on the world scene of evil nations, individuals, and ideologies.

The characteristics that Morgenthau noted—many of which remain

essentially valid today—made U.S. leaders in some ways unsuited for managing a long-term conflict with the Soviet Union, and susceptible to recurrent hopes about either a rapprochement with or a victory over the Soviet Union.

In addition to the characteristics that Morgenthau noted, concerns about the enormous costs of sustaining a permanent rivalry with the USSR have often encouraged U.S. leaders as well as the general public to seek a termination.¹ During the Second World War, this fear of high costs already influenced the American approach to the Soviet problem. Although President Roosevelt has often been criticized—with some justification—for misjudging Stalin and his intentions, it is less often recalled that the President felt he had to make every effort to preserve U.S.-Soviet cooperation, simply because he believed that once the war ended the American people would not tolerate a large military force and the permanent overseas involvement that confrontation with the Soviets would require. Even after Soviet intentions aroused suspicions in the Truman administration, intense public pressures for rapid demobilization of U.S. forces undercut, so American officials felt, U.S. efforts to challenge Soviet moves in Eastern Europe and Iran.

This concern about costs, it should be emphasized, has been shared by hawks and doves, liberals and conservatives alike. Although in recent years the argument has been pressed by liberals concerned with the effect of military spending on social programs, there was a vigorous debate during the 1940s and 1950s in which fiscal conservatives contended that the inflationary effect of deficit spending might be more of a threat to national security than was the Soviet Union. In the era before Keynesianism became fashionable—and before it had become clear that the postwar capitalist system would be able to hold its own economically against the socialist—military spending was thought to be an economic drain rather than a stimulus. For these reasons, Truman administration officials such as Defense Secretary Louis Johnson argued against Truman's defense buildup. Several years later, the Eisenhower administration did in fact slash military spending in the name of a strong national economy.

This ongoing concern about the costs of maintaining a rivalry with the USSR stands in somewhat ironic contrast with an American insensitivity when it comes to the advantages that the United States

¹As Helmut Sonnenfeldt remarked, "[matching Soviet military power] is a very long and tough row to hoe: It is very expensive and Americans do not like long, tough rows to hoe. We prefer solutions that come quickly and are sort of final, like Salk vaccine." U.S. Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior*, 96th Cong., 1st Sess., interview with author Joseph Whelan, June 7, 1979, p. 545.

has enjoyed in its competition with the Soviet Union. As the leading power to emerge from World War II, the United States enjoyed superiority over the Soviet Union in numerous areas: industrial strength, access to overseas markets and raw materials, and possession of the nuclear monopoly. Preoccupied as they often have been with the "costs" and the "responsibilities" of maintaining the postwar hegemony they inherited, U.S. elites have often been unaware of the extent to which the Soviet leaders see these responsibilities as a system of privileges in which the Soviet Union does not share. This has enabled U.S. leaders to reduce the dimensions of the problem to that of a set of discrete, potentially solvable problems—Poland, Germany, Berlin, Vietnam, the Middle East, the strategic arms race—rather than, as in some other interpretations of U.S.-Soviet rivalry, to attribute them to a struggle for influence in the entire global system and over the global balance of power, of which these problems were only particular manifestations. The U.S. effort in reshaping the postwar world order—an effort originally motivated to a large extent by anticommunism—proved so extraordinarily successful that it came to be seen as the natural order of things, effectively neutral in the contest between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The hegemonic U.S. position of the postwar period—in economics, finance, votes in the UN, and so forth—also coincided with a period of marked U.S. strategic superiority. Here again, American elites seemed to approach relations with the Soviet Union as if largely unconscious of this superiority. This point was underscored by Zbigniew Brzezinski with specific reference to American and Soviet behavior during the Cuban missile crisis:

[For] more than two decades American-Soviet hostility has been conducted against a background of overwhelming American strategic superiority—a superiority so real that American policymakers often took it for granted to a degree that made them unaware that they were politically exploiting it. The classic example is provided by the Cuban missile crisis. The author has had the opportunity to discuss that crisis with several of the top American policymakers of the time; they are convinced that American strategic superiority was not decisive—that the outcome was essentially a function of conventional American superiority in the Caribbean, plus a combination of will and diplomatic skill in bargaining with Moscow. In other words, they have explicitly stated that the result would have been the same had strategic symmetry prevailed.

This viewpoint reveals the subjective state of mind of the American policymakers but is deficient as an objective analysis of the actual conflict relationship. It takes into account neither the subjective state of mind of the Soviet leaders, who may have been analyzing the

power relation differently, nor the alternatives that might have been available to them if strategic symmetry had existed.²

The coincidence of American strategic superiority with other aspects of American hegemony in the postwar period (up to about 1970) has had, as Brzezinski goes on to note, widely divergent effects on U.S. and Soviet elite perceptions. If U.S. leaders were unaware of the role that superiority played in maintaining a world order congenial to American interests, Soviet leaders erred in the other direction and tended to confuse the exercise of international influence with the acquisition of military—and particularly strategic nuclear—power.

ROOSEVELT, HOPKINS, AND HULL AS PROTOTYPE

All three of the factors listed above—American political culture, reluctance to incur high costs, and an unusually favorable international position—played a role in influencing the way in which the Roosevelt administration perceived the Soviet problem. These factors encouraged Roosevelt and his advisers to ignore potential sources of conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, and, once these conflicts could no longer be ignored, to seek solutions in ways that would later appear unrealistic. To the extent that today's "soft managers" have adopted elements of the Roosevelt approach to the Soviet problem, they have done so, as will be seen, in response to many of the same appeals listed above.³

Although initially reluctant to accept the reality of U.S.-Soviet conflict, as the war progressed—and particularly as they dealt with Stalin at Teheran and Yalta—President Roosevelt and his advisers were increasingly exposed to Soviet suspicion and hostility. As early as 1943 the problem of Poland began to cast a shadow over the future of the wartime alliance. Other areas of disagreement included the conduct of the war (Stalin's demand for a second front), the future of Germany, and the issue of postwar reparations. As disagreement grew, Roosevelt embarked on an effort to convince Stalin of America's good intentions. He believed that cooperation among the United States, the USSR, and Britain in a new United Nations organization could become the cornerstone of peaceful postwar order.

²Z. Brzezinski, "U.S.-Soviet Relations," in Henry Owen (ed.), *The Next Phase in Foreign Policy*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1973, p. 119.

³The term "soft manager" in this context is not meant to imply that these individuals are in any sense "soft on communism" or any less committed to U.S. national interests than their "hard management" counterparts. At issue are differences of perception, not of purpose. The term "soft" follows common English usage, and reflects the soft managers' emphasis on elements of cooperation and de-emphasis of confrontation in their approach to dealings with the Soviet Union.

Throughout this period, Ambassador Harriman and his assistant George Kennan expressed serious doubts about the premises of Roosevelt's policies. From Moscow, they warned about Stalin's intentions toward Eastern Europe. On September 9, 1944, Harriman cabled a message to Harry Hopkins, but intended for the President, in which he warned that "unless we take issue with the present policy there is every indication the Soviet Union will become a world bully wherever their interests are involved."⁴ In that same month, Kennan drafted, on his own initiative, a long and pessimistic paper entitled "Russia—Seven Years Later." As Kennan later put it, he was convinced that "not only our policy toward Russia, but our plans for the shaping of the postwar world, were based on a dangerous misreading of the personality, the intentions, and the political situation of the Soviet leadership."⁵

Although Kennan's insights were to play a role in the hardening of U.S. policy that was soon to come (and were to provide, as will be seen, the core concepts of the management approach to the Soviet problem), the assumptions and hopes that Roosevelt and Hopkins expressed were to resurface in modified forms in the thinking of subsequent American elites, most notably those of the soft management school. For this reason, it is worth examining the beliefs about the Soviet Union associated with the Roosevelt administration's basic assumption of a termination by accommodation. In a subsequent section, the Roosevelt prototype will be contrasted with what is in many ways its "alter ego"—namely the policy of seeking a termination by victory and its offshoot, the hard management school of the later post-war period.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TERMINATION BY ACCOMMODATION

Some of the general assumptions about the USSR that have characterized the termination by accommodation thinking of the Roosevelt administration and that deserve closer inspection include:

1. The cause of the conflict is incidental and not structural. It is rooted in suspicions or misunderstandings, and not in what since have come to be called "geopolitical" factors.

⁴W. Averell Harriman, *America and Russia in a Changing World*, Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, N.Y., 1971, p. 43.

⁵George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, Little, Brown & Co., Inc., Boston, 1967, p. 531.

2. Personal relationships between U.S. and Soviet leaders are important. Communications can help to clear away the suspicions that underlie the conflict. There are differences between hawks and doves on the Soviet as well as on the American side. Moreover, the balance between these factions can have a decisive bearing on the U.S.-Soviet rivalry. One group or even one individual could mean war, another peace. Therefore, U.S. policy must strive to strengthen the doves.
3. Ideology is of declining significance in determining Soviet behavior. Increasingly, the Soviet Union will pursue its own "national interests," which, in contrast with its ideological ambitions, are perceived as "legitimate" and not basically a threat to the United States and its allies.
4. To the extent that the "communist" threat is taken seriously, it is seen as a series of discrete "vertical" conflicts that can be dealt with on a one-by-one basis. There is little sense of a larger "horizontal" struggle between the United States and the USSR, which then impels each power to back opposing sides within each of these vertical conflicts.
5. Functional interdependencies such as trade and scientific exchange are desirable in that they can win Soviet trust, help to further "de-ideologize" the Soviets, and hasten the internal transformation of the Soviet Union. If political relations are not going well, these links can serve as a substitute to "get things moving again" or to "break the ice."
6. The Soviet Union can be integrated into the international system as a whole. It is in fact a kind of "black sheep" of the international community that desires to be so integrated.

Sources of Conflict

Roosevelt did not believe that Soviet hostility was grounded in inherent structural or ideological factors, but that it was the result of an understandable suspiciousness arising out of the Soviet Union's previous isolation from the capitalist world. As he stated in 1944,

I think the Russians are perfectly friendly; they aren't trying to gobble up all the rest of Europe or the world. They didn't know us, that's the really fundamental difference. . . . They haven't got any crazy ideas of conquest . . . and now that they have gotten to know us they are much more willing to accept us.⁶

⁶Franklin D. Roosevelt, speech to the Foreign Policy Association, October 21, 1944, quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1972, pp. 6-7.

Charles Bohlen, who served as Roosevelt's interpreter in many of the conversations with Stalin, commented on Roosevelt's perceptions of the differences between himself and Stalin:

As far as the Soviets were concerned, I do not think Roosevelt had any real comprehension of the great gulf that separated the thinking of a Bolshevik from a non-Bolshevik, and particularly from an American. He felt that Stalin viewed the world somewhat in the same light as he did, and that Stalin's hostility and distrust, which were evident in the wartime conferences, were due to the neglect that Soviet Russia had suffered at the hands of other countries for years after the Revolution. What he did not understand was that Stalin's enmity was based on profound ideological convictions. The existence of a gap between the Soviet Union and the United States, a gap that could not be bridged, was never fully perceived by Franklin Roosevelt.⁷

Failing, as Bohlen notes, to perceive the magnitude of the gulf between himself and Stalin, Roosevelt took it upon himself to try to convince the Soviet leader of his own good intentions, and to draw him out of what was seen as a self-imposed isolation.

This readiness to ascribe Soviet hostility to the passing experiences of the interwar period was shared by Roosevelt's senior advisers Cordell Hull and Harry Hopkins. According to Hull,

We must remember that the Russians were locked up and isolated for a quarter of a century. During that time, whenever they heard somebody on the outside say something about Russia, it was generally a violent epithet. They became very seclusive and more suspicious than usual, and vituperative in return. They got into the habit of slashing back at anybody who attacked them, and sometimes much more savagely than the offense justified. Such sudden, sporadic acts and utterances became part of the Russian custom.

Nevertheless, I believe that the Russians are peacefully inclined people. I believe also that the attitude of the Soviet Government on religion is softening. We must not forget that the Russians have many qualities similar to our own. I believe that in a reasonable time they will work together with other nations in the projected international organization, but that it will take time for them to get into step internationally.⁸

In a similar vein, shortly before his death Hopkins wrote that

We know or believe that Russia's interests, so far as we can anticipate them, do not afford an opportunity for a major difference with us in foreign affairs. We believe we are mutually dependent upon each other for economic reasons. We find the Russians as individuals easy to deal with. The Russians undoubtedly like the American people. They like the United States. They trust the United States more than they trust any power in the world. I believe they not only have no

⁷Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History*, W. W. Norton, New York, 1973, p. 211.

⁸Cordell Hull, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, Macmillan, New York, 1948, pp. 1464-1465.

wish to fight with us, but are determined to take their place in world affairs in an international organization, and above all, they want to maintain friendly relations with us.⁹

These statements reflect a reluctance on the part of the administration to regard conflict as endemic to the international system and a tendency to see harmony as natural. As discussed below, such a view of international conflict and its sources was not the exclusive property of the doves seeking an accommodation with the Soviet Union but later came to be shared by the hawks and used by them to argue the case for a termination by victory.

With the onset of the cold war, most U.S. officials dismissed as unrealistic the Roosevelt administration's assessment of the sources of U.S.-Soviet conflict, and came to accept Kennan's view that conflict was rooted in factors other than misunderstanding and suspicion. Most officials, however (including Kennan himself), would not completely reject Roosevelt's original insight that suspicion played at least some role in contributing to U.S.-Soviet hostility. How big a role and how active the United States should be in attempting to dispel that suspicion have remained matters of dispute. In general, the soft managers have been more sympathetic than the hard managers to the view that some Soviet actions do arise from suspicion of the United States, its leaders, and its policies.—As will be seen later, the hard managers are more likely to play down the importance of mistrust *between* the two systems, and to stress instead some fundamental defect—usually ideology or national character—*within* the Soviet system.

Personal Factors and the Role of Individuals

The Roosevelt administration's view that personal relationships would be of paramount importance in determining the future course of U.S.-Soviet relations was a natural outgrowth of its tendency to ascribe the sources of conflict to suspicion, rather than to deep-seated structural factors. The wartime alliance, dominated as it was by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, reinforced this tendency to rely on personal diplomacy to resolve political problems. Convinced that it was important to wean Stalin away from his suspicions about capitalist intrigue, Roosevelt and his advisers saw high-level contacts as a means to this end.

This emphasis on personalities, along with the fear that a change in leadership (on either side) could cause a fundamental reversal in rela-

⁹Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History*, Harper and Row, New York, 1948, p. 922.

tions, tended to distract attention from more basic questions. For example, how would relations be affected by changes such as the destruction of Germany and Japan as great powers? The thinking of the administration is best revealed in a famous remark by Harry Hopkins:

We really believed in our hearts that this was the dawn of the new day we had all been praying for and talking about for so many years. We were absolutely certain that we had won the first great victory of the peace—and, by "we," I mean all of us, the whole civilized human race. The Russians had proved that they could be reasonable and farseeing and there wasn't any doubt in the minds of the President or any of us that we could live with them and get along with them peacefully for as far into the future as any of us could imagine. But I have to make one amendment to that—I think we all had in our minds the reservation that we could not foretell what the results would be if anything should happen to Stalin. We felt sure that we could count on him to be reasonable and sensible and understanding—but we never could be sure who or what might be in back of him there in the Kremlin.¹⁰

In the later postwar period, the soft management school has continued to emphasize the influence of personal factors on U.S.-Soviet relations, although usually without arguing that these factors by themselves can lead to a U.S.-Soviet accommodation. In practical terms, the soft managers are more likely to favor summitry even, or especially, in a period of high tension because personal contact is seen as a useful way of lessening such tension.

A second manifestation of the Roosevelt administration's emphasis on personal factors in the soft managers' thinking is evident in their contention that U.S. policy should aim to strengthen what are seen as "dovish" elements within the Politburo. Thus Senator George McGovern, commenting on U.S.-Soviet tensions of the late seventies and the Soviet motives for invading Afghanistan, wrote:

President Brezhnev, who had invested heavily in detente, and whose health and faculties were impaired, had to confront his harder-line colleagues with a catalogue of failure and frustration: the SALT II treaty seemed lost beyond retrieval in the Senate; the United States was preparing to increase its military spending; NATO had agreed to deploy a new generation of American nuclear armed missiles in Europe; the United States was moving closer to a working relationship with the Chinese. . . . Under these circumstances the Soviets may have felt they had little to lose by using military force to retrieve a disintegrating situation in a bordering state.¹¹

¹⁰Ibid., p. 870.

¹¹George McGovern, "How To Avert a New 'Cold War,'" *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 245, No. 6, June 1980, p. 47.

The Perceived Conflict between Ideology and Pragmatism

The Roosevelt administration was captivated by the idea that Marxist-Leninist ideology was beginning to fade away as a force in determining Soviet behavior. At the time, this interpretation was understandable, in view of Stalin's extensive efforts to replace the external symbols of communism with those of traditional Russian nationalism in order to rally the population against the Germans. Roosevelt and his advisers expected that this trend would continue into the postwar period. With the erosion of Marxist-Leninist ideology, they believed that Russian national interests would come increasingly to the fore. Because of the accompanying lack of understanding of the "balance of power" sources of international conflict, few seemed to question whether even an un-ideological Russia, one purely concerned with pursuing (what it saw as its) national interests, would come into conflict with the United States or indeed with the "legitimate" interests of any other state.

Also, with ideology on the wane, Roosevelt believed he detected a trend toward convergence of the U.S. and Soviet systems. As he once told Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, the Soviet Union had evolved

from the original form of Soviet Communism . . . toward a modified form of state socialism. . . . He believed [according to Welles] that American democracy and Soviet Communism could never meet. But he told me that he did believe that if one took the figure 100 as representing the difference between American democracy and Soviet Communism in 1917, with the United States at 100 and the Soviet Union at 0, American democracy might eventually reach the figure of 60 and the Soviet system might reach the figure of 40.¹²

This supposed trend toward convergence convinced Roosevelt that conflict between the two sides was not inevitable.

Although such optimism was never fully recaptured, there have been times since 1945 when the view has been advanced, albeit in different and usually more sophisticated forms, that ideology is dying out as a factor in determining Soviet behavior and that some kind of gradual convergence is occurring. Usually these views are associated with a soft management approach to the Soviet problem. During the sixties, for example, such officials as Secretary of State Dean Rusk, National Security Adviser Rostow, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, then a member of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department, came under the influence of the "end of ideology" theories then current in academic circles. Although none of these officials could be described, then or now, as holding soft views on communism, their acceptance of

¹²Quoted in Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, p. 41.

the end of ideology theme did lead them to see the Soviet Union as potentially less threatening than before, and less threatening than contemporary Communist China.

Rostow in particular believed in a kind of economic determinism—an industrial imperative that dictated how ruling elites at different stages of development thought or chose to think. He theorized that ideology—like nationalism, which was seen as a kind of ideology—was a preindustrial phenomenon, and reflected the conflict that was endemic to underdeveloped societies. As societies developed, their ideology would die out and would be replaced by the pragmatic, problem-solving mentality that a complex industrial society required. Since Rostow also believed that ideology was the main cause of international conflict, he surmised that as the USSR became less “ideological” it would become less aggressive and recognize more areas of common interest with the United States. At the same time, Rostow’s theory that less developed countries were more ideologically directed at home and hence more aggressive abroad seemed to confirm the prevailing view that China and not the Soviet Union was the main troublemaker on the international scene.

These theories led Rostow to speculate whether the United States and the USSR might in fact have a common interest in containing China, and to suggest that the Sino-Soviet split was a disagreement between Chinese “ideology” and Soviet “pragmatism,” in which the United States and China were in effect vying with each other for the soul of Moscow. Rostow went so far as to translate outstanding U.S.-Soviet problems—the problem of Germany and that of arms control—into a framework in which there were “Chinese” and there were “American” solutions, but in which the Soviet Union had no real independent interests of its own—be they legitimate or illegitimate. He stated that

two great unresolved issues [arms control and Germany] pose for those responsible in Moscow the same question which the Chinese Communists have put to them in recent months with such brutal candor: Is the policy of the Soviet Union to be a policy rooted in the interests of the Russian nation and its people? Or is it to be a policy rooted in an abiding effort to spread the cause of Communism over the face of the earth? In the end, this remains the relevant question.¹³

Rostow echoes here the Rooseveltian view that the interests of “the Russian nation and of its people,” if correctly perceived in Moscow, would not pose a threat to the United States, and would lead to a convergence with certain American points of view.

¹³Walt W. Rostow, “The Third Round,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 1, October 1963, p. 8.

Such "end of ideology" thinking carried over into the early Nixon administration, as was evident in the President's 1971 foreign policy report to Congress, authored by Henry Kissinger:

The Soviet Union shares with other countries the overwhelming temptation to continue to base its policies at home and abroad on old and familiar concepts. But perceptions framed in the Nineteenth Century are hardly relevant to the new era we are now entering.

If we have had to learn the limitations of our own power, the lessons of the last two decades must have left their imprint on the leadership in the Kremlin—in the recognition that Marxist ideology is not the surest guide to the problems of a changing industrial society, the worldwide decline in the appeal of ideology, and most of all in the foreign policy dilemmas repeatedly posed by the spread of Communism to states which refuse to endure permanent submission to Soviet authority—a development illustrated vividly by the Soviet schism with China.

The central problem of Soviet-American relations, then, is whether our two countries can transcend the past and work together to build a lasting peace.¹⁴

With the end of ideology thinking of the forties (e.g., Roosevelt) and sixties (e.g., Rostow), it was assumed that the demise of Marxist-Leninist ideology would mean a shift to a pragmatic, problem-solving outlook on the part of the Soviet leaders. By the late seventies and early eighties, a different end of ideology theory had arisen—one that saw the replacement of ideology not by pragmatism, but by an aggressive nationalism. As discussed below, the view that ideology was being replaced by nationalism was foreshadowed in some of Kennan's work on the Russian national character and has since become a characteristic of much hard management thinking.

Perceiving the Conflict as Vertical Rather than Horizontal

From the time the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917, the Soviet challenge to the outside world has been both "vertical" and "horizontal," as the Marxist theory of struggle within societies was fused with Lenin's analysis of the conflict between "imperialist" and proletarian states. As William Zimmerman has written,

Vertical, class, and economic concepts were transposed and adjusted to account for the basically horizontal, international, and political arena in which the Soviet leaders engaged their class enemies. In such a world—where the proletariat and the Soviet Union, while not

¹⁴Richard M. Nixon, "The Second Annual Report to the Congress on U.S. Foreign Policy," February 25, 1971, in *Public Papers of the Presidents: Richard Nixon, 1971*, Washington, D.C., 1972, p. 304.

identical, were nevertheless inseparable—Stalin's transformation of "proletarian internationalism" into a concept asserting the hegemony of Soviet interests constituted a logical adaptation. For the Bolsheviks in power, "capitalism" became a system of states, as well as a global socioeconomic formation.¹⁵

In the interwar period, the Soviet—or communist—threat tended to be viewed in its vertical, that is, internal subversion, dimension. This was understandable, given the fact that the Soviet Union, being diplomatically isolated and militarily weak, had few levers of influence in the world outside the international communist movement.

Against this background, the Roosevelt administration interpreted the Soviet Union's "revolutionary" impulses as a series of discrete vertical efforts to impose its socioeconomic order on other countries. The Soviet challenge was viewed as one of individual acts of intervention in other countries' affairs. It followed that a correct policy for the United States would be one aimed at countering these individual transgressions on a one-by-one basis. According to Hull,

Since 1917 Russia had been wrestling with many nations that had refused to recognize her, more or less on account of her policy of conducting subversive activities from Moscow. By constant effort, she had gradually increased the number of recognitions—being obliged in connection with virtually all acts of recognition to agree not to practice subversive activities against the countries establishing relations with her.

That she did not abandon these activities completely is a matter of record; but it was our view that the other governments, by steadily organizing and building up and strengthening world opinion against such activities, would make as nearly certain as possible Russia's abandonment of interference in the affairs of other countries. It is of record that the President and I had been hammer and tongs at the Russian Government many times during the years from the recognition in 1933 until we approached the Moscow Conference in 1943. I never lost an occasion to point out to the Russians the advantage to themselves of abandoning their thorny policy of intervention.¹⁶

In looking ahead to the postwar period, officials such as Hull hoped that the Soviet Union would not resume the practice of supporting

¹⁵William Zimmerman, *Soviet Perspectives on International Relations, 1956-1967*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1969, p. 3.

¹⁶Hull, *Memoirs*, pp. 1467-1468. Before granting diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union in 1933, Roosevelt obtained a pledge from Foreign Minister Litvinov that the USSR would "refrain and restrain all persons in Government service and all organizations of the Government or under its direct or indirect control . . . from any act, overt or covert, liable in any way to injure the tranquility, prosperity, order or security of any part of the United States." Quoted in Adam B. Ulam, "The Soviet Union and the Rules of the International Game," in Kurt London (ed.), *The Soviet Impact on World Politics*, Hawthorn, New York, 1974, p. 27.

internal subversion. These hopes were encouraged by Stalin's dissolution of the Comintern, and by the general feeling, noted above, that ideology was of diminishing importance to the Soviets and was being supplanted by a nationalist preoccupation with security and domestic development. While it lasted, the expectation of an end to what had heretofore been the Soviet Union's most dangerous activities gave rise to hopes for a termination by accommodation. Hull, for example, remarked in May 1943 that the final and definite prohibition of Comintern activities would surpass all other actions that the Soviets might take to improve relations with the West.

The belief that the USSR's subversive impulses could be severed from its domestic order—with which administration officials claimed to have no particular quarrel—was bolstered by the administration's tendency to interpret communism at face value, as little more than an alternative economic system, based on certain well-understood features such as central planning, collective ownership of property, and so forth. What was objectionable, these officials felt, was not so much the system itself, but its propensity to try to foist a similar system on other countries. Roosevelt, Hopkins, and even Harry Truman were almost reluctant to pass judgment on the merits of the Soviet system as such. Hopkins, for example, wrote that

If Russia wants a socialist state—and incidentally, anyone who thinks that the Soviet Union is moving to the right economically is, in my opinion, greatly mistaken—that is surely their own business. They are absolutely sure it is going to work better for the hundred and eighty million citizens of the Soviet Union than a capitalist economy would work. They do not think much of the way the capitalist economy worked in places like France, Belgium and Holland just before the war. They seem to have a pretty healthy respect for ours, however.¹⁷

This appraisal stands in contrast with that of the Dulles period, when the term "communism" came to represent not only the moral antithesis of everything that the United States stood for but also a system whose inherent defects made it aggressive and expansionist by nature.

The Role of Functional Interdependencies

The belief that accommodation with the Soviet Union was possible gave rise to and was in turn reinforced by the view that interdependencies such as trade would play a role in determining the fundamental course of the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Harry Hopkins believed that the complementarity of U.S. and Soviet economic needs would

¹⁷Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, p. 923.

ensure peaceful cooperation into the postwar period. As he wrote shortly before his death, "We know or believe that Russia's interests, so far as we can anticipate them, do not afford an opportunity for a major difference in foreign affairs. We believe we are mutually dependent upon each other for economic reasons."¹⁸ In 1944 Treasury Secretary Morgenthau argued that the United States should provide the Soviet Union with an immediate credit of \$10 billion, without attaching any conditions. This action, Morgenthau believed, would reassure the Soviets of America's peaceful intentions. At the Bretton Woods Conference of that same year, Morgenthau and Hull worked to secure Soviet adherence to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, again largely for political reasons.

Later, as U.S.-Soviet tensions rose, other officials called for special efforts to promote trade and other ties as a device to improve political relations. Henry Wallace, then Secretary of Commerce, wrote a letter to President Truman in which he stated that

[We] know that much of the recent Soviet behavior which has caused us concern has been the result of their dire economic needs and of their disturbed sense of security. The events of the past few months have thrown the Soviets back to their pre-1939 fears of "capitalist encirclement" and to their erroneous belief that the Western World, including the U.S.A., is invariably and unanimously hostile.

I think we can disabuse the Soviet mind and strengthen the faith of the Soviets in our sincere devotion to the cause of peace by proving to them that we want to trade with them and to cement our economic relations with them. To do this, it is necessary to talk with them in an understanding way, with full realization of their difficulties and yet with emphasis on the lack of realism in many of their assumptions and conclusions which stand in the way of peaceful world cooperation.¹⁹

Although very few U.S. officials after this period have gone so far as to claim, as did Wallace, that functional interdependencies such as trade could in themselves produce an accommodation with the Soviet Union, the soft managers have generally been optimistic in their assessment of the role that such interdependencies can play in either "leavening" the Soviet system or in giving the Soviet Union an ongoing stake in maintaining good ties with the West. In addition, the soft management school to some extent has echoed Wallace's theme that trade and other functional ties could serve as a kind of motor for political detente, particularly at a time of rising tensions. This idea was expressed in 1974, for example, by the then Senator Walter Mondale:

Today, the fact that major aspects of detente—SALT, MBFR [Mutual

¹⁸Ibid., p. 922.

¹⁹Quoted in Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Year of Decisions*, Vol. I, Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, N.Y., 1955, pp. 555-556.

Balanced Force Reductions] and the European Security Conference—are bogged down is raising serious questions about ultimate Soviet intentions and the durability of detente. However, we need not, indeed cannot, remain fixated on issues that divide East and West. By taking advantage of the measure of detente we now have, and by moving forward to systematically engage the Soviet Union in some of the economic problems besetting us, we can test the strength of detente and the broad intentions of the East. This also may be the only way to establish the kind of relationship that will enable us to resolve the East-West issues we still face.²⁰

Integration of the Soviet Union into the International System

"We found three pivotal questions," Cordell Hull wrote of the situation faced by the administration in 1945. "The first was to keep Russia solidly in the international movement. The second was to develop an alert and informed public opinion in support of the program proposed. And the third was to keep the entire undertaking out of domestic politics."²¹ In a similar vein, Bohlen recalled that Hopkins "clung to one central idea, that good relations between the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain were the most important factor in the world, and [that] everything should be done to promote them."²²

This concern for unity, leaving aside the unique conditions that had engendered it, was an outgrowth of the administration's view of the sources of U.S.-USSR conflict. Administration officials believed that conscious efforts in Moscow and Washington to disparage the opponents of U.S.-Soviet harmony could prevent relations from deteriorating; these officials regarded the fact that Stalin would want to share in these efforts as self-evident. Both Hull and Hopkins rated "malcontents" in the United States, whom they believed were working to sabotage allied unity, on a par with the "hawks" waiting in the wings in the Soviet Politburo. This was an example of the role that "mirror imaging" played in forming U.S. perceptions of the Soviet Union, in that it reflected the Roosevelt administration's tendency to project its own concerns about American isolationism onto the Soviet Union.

As U.S. aspirations for world order have become less legalistic (i.e., less centered on the UN as a form of nascent world government) and more functionalist (i.e., oriented toward problems such as pollution,

²⁰Walter Mondale, "Beyond Detente: Toward International Economic Security," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 53, No. 1, October 1974, p. 20.

²¹Hull, *Memoirs*, p. 1659.

²²Bohlen, *Witness to History*, p. 243.

law of the sea, food, and development of less developed countries), the later soft managers have followed the Roosevelt tradition and have sought to include the Soviet Union in efforts to solve global problems and to undertake global projects. An example would be Senator Fulbright's recommendation, which he made over a period of years, that the Soviet Union be invited to participate in building a second Central American canal:

Would not Soviet participation in a canal consortium tend to strengthen their commitment to a peaceful status quo, just as their adherence to the Antarctic Treaty has made them cooperative associates in keeping the cold war away from the Antarctic continent? Is there not something to be gained for world peace and stability from an arrangement which would bring the Russians into close cooperation with nations they regard as "imperialists" in a kind of enterprise which they have hitherto denounced as "imperialist exploitation"? Would there not be significant psychological symbolism in the Soviet Union sharing responsibility for the construction and maintenance of a vital international facility, if only because of the striking contrast with the more disruptive activities of their revolutionary past? In summary, is there not something to be gained for world peace from bringing a difficult and dangerous nation into one more enterprise in which cooperation in the performance of practical tasks would be permitted to do its eroding work on the passions that divide us?²³

A similar tendency to link the Soviet problem with world order problems seemed to characterize President Carter's thinking, at least early in his term:

We hope that the Soviet Union will join with us and other nations in playing a larger role in aiding the developing world, for common aid efforts will help us build a bridge of mutual confidence in one another.

We want to see the Soviets further engaged in the growing pattern of international activities designed to deal with human problems—not only because they can be of real help but also because we both should have a greater stake in the creation of a constructive and peaceful world order. . . .²⁴

A more recent example is that of George McGovern, who observes:

As the only powers with global military and political reach, [the United States and the Soviet Union] are the only nations with the capacity to maintain a semblance of order in a turbulent world. To do this they would have to set aside the doctrines that pitted them

²³J. William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power*, Random House, New York, 1966, p. 207.

²⁴Speech at the University of Notre Dame, May 22, 1977, in *Department of State Bulletin*, June 13, 1977; speech before the Southern Legislative Conference, July 22, 1977, *New York Times*, July 23, 1977.

against one another—the Truman, Nixon, Brezhnev, and Carter doctrines—in favor of a common endeavor for world order. The advantages would be considerable: neither has profited greatly or very long from various client relationships in the Third World.²⁵

McGovern's statement is a particularly good example of the termination by accommodation-soft management tendency to take for granted the international position of the United States, and to ignore instances where the Soviets might see the United States as a privileged power whose position in the world they would want to supplant ("neither has profited greatly or very long from various client relationships").

²⁵McGovern, *Atlantic Monthly*, p. 57.

III. TERMINATION BY VICTORY

THE APPEAL

Termination by victory appealed to American political leaders and the general public for many of the same reasons as did termination by accommodation. Both termination schools of thought betrayed an impatience with ambiguous, difficult international situations existing over long periods of time. Both formulated policies, the success of which ultimately depended on the internal transformation of the Soviet system. In their own ways, both assigned greater importance to the power of ideals than to geopolitical or balance-of-power considerations.

Like Roosevelt and Hopkins, who believed that the United States and the Soviet Union could work together to create an international order founded on the principles of the United Nations Charter, Paul Nitze and John Foster Dulles saw the postwar struggle in terms of ideals—as a contest between the “idea of freedom” and the “idea of slavery.” Although the document in which Paul Nitze and his staff outlined for President Truman a strategy for victory, NSC 68, is most often remembered for its role in “militarizing” U.S. foreign policy, it included a strongly idealistic component that envisioned even the military defeat of the Soviet Union as futile unless it was accompanied by a comparable defeat for communism on the plane of ideals:

Resort to war is not only a last resort for a free society, but it is also an act which cannot definitively end the fundamental conflict in the realm of ideas. The idea of slavery can only be overcome by the timely and persistent demonstration of the superiority of the idea of freedom. Military victory alone would only partially and perhaps only temporarily affect the fundamental conflict, for although the ability of the Kremlin to threaten our security might be for a time destroyed, the resurgence of totalitarian forces and the reestablishment of the Soviet system or its equivalent would not be long delayed unless great progress were made in the fundamental conflict. . . .

Victory in such a war would have brought us little if at all closer to victory in the fundamental ideological conflict.¹

Both termination schools used the general principles of the United Nations Charter to support a preferred vision of U.S.-Soviet relations; each hoped to bring Soviet behavior into conformity with this vision,

¹NSC 68, “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security,” April 14, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1950*, Vol. I, Washington, D.C., 1977, pp. 237-282.

in one case by inducement, in the other by compulsion. Whereas Roosevelt hoped that U.S.-Soviet conflict could be subsumed under an effective UN organization and adherence to the principles of the UN Charter, NSC 68 recommended that the United States work "to bring about a basic change in the conduct of international relations by the government in power in Russia, to conform with the purposes and principles set forth in the UN Charter."²

In their reference to the universal ideals of the UN Charter, representatives of both termination schools betrayed their attachment to what the historian John Lewis Gaddis has called the "universalist" approach to national security. The universalists, Gaddis wrote, "sought congeniality through homogeneity. . . ." Their objective was "to make the world resemble the United States as much as possible, on the assumption that once it did, nothing in it could pose a serious threat." This view stood in contrast with that of the "particularists," who argued that what was really important was "to ensure that the world does not threaten the United States, whether it resembles it or not."³

As "universalists," adherents of each termination school tended to regard the internal transformation of the Soviet system as essential for the solution of foreign policy problems. Roosevelt believed that an internal change was already under way, and hoped to hasten it by making the Soviet leaders feel more secure. Although NSC 68 acknowledged no such tendencies within the Soviet system, it nonetheless outlined an ambitious plan, with the objective of compelling the Soviet Union to change not only its external behavior but its internal order as well. This could be accomplished, the document argued, by adopting policies precisely the opposite of those followed by the Roosevelt administration: by isolating the Soviet Union rather than integrating it into the international system; by discrediting the Soviet leaders rather than attempting to reassure them; and by building up military power rather than seeking mutual disarmament. Both points of view were open to Kennan's "particularist" objection that the possibilities for the transformation of the Soviet Union were in fact remote, and that in any event a regime change could not eradicate all of the underlying causes for conflict between the two sides.

Even in regard to the problem of costs—a perennial one for a democracy—the accommodation and victory schools of thought shared a common ground. Both displayed an impatience and uncertainty in the face of maintaining an "imperial role" for the indefinite future. While

²Ibid., p. 289.

³John Lewis Gaddis, "The Strategy of Containment," in Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis (eds.), *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978.

one group sought to rid itself of these costs in an accommodation, the other called for extraordinary efforts which, it was claimed, would pay off in eventual victory and presumably lift the burden of sustaining containment over the long run. In much the same way Roosevelt had agonized throughout the war years over the possible resurgence of isolationism and the American people's unwillingness to support an active foreign policy, NSC 68 devoted much attention to costs and to the question of how a free society could compete effectively with a totalitarian system that was better able to mobilize its resources for military purposes. Although Nitze himself thought that this particular asymmetry could be overcome by government policies designed to tap unused capacity in the inherently larger American economy, others who argued in favor of termination by victory, notably the Republicans of the 1952 presidential campaign, favored a repudiation of containment and the adoption of a strategy of victory on the grounds that it would be far less costly in the long run.

Finally, both schools, again probably as a result of the "universalist" approach to national security that they shared, tended to "mirror image" when it came to prescribing policies for dealing with the Soviet Union. Roosevelt sought to deal with Stalin as a politician faced with problems similar to his own. NSC 68 recommended, on the other hand, that "the current Soviet cold war technique [be] used against the Soviet Union."⁴

It was in fact this kind of mirror-imaging that contributed to the growing feeling during the late forties and early fifties that American policy was too passive; that like the Soviets, the United States had to adopt an aggressive strategy. If the United States, it was argued, aimed only at protracted stalemate, and the USSR at victory, the United States would operate at a disadvantage. The Soviets would know what they wanted; the Americans would lose sight of their objectives. The USSR would be able to command domestic support; the United States would be unable to inspire sacrifice in the pursuit of a mere stalemate. It was this sense of the inherent asymmetry between U.S. passivity (containment) and Soviet activism that gave rise to the call for a strategy of victory over the Soviet Union, and gave this call its surface plausibility.

Ultimately, historic roles came to be seen as almost interchangeable. The USSR was said to be "on the offensive," the United States "on the defensive." The need was obvious: The United States had to go on the offensive itself. In transferring American experience to the Soviet Union, or Soviet experience to the United States, neither termination school confronted fully the problem of the deep structural

⁴NSC 68, p. 285.

differences between the two countries or formulated policies that recognized the strengths (and weaknesses) inherent in the U.S. society and the American system of government.

NSC 68 AS PROTOTYPE

If there were underlying factors in American political culture that encouraged officials to seek the kind of victory outlined in NSC 68, the immediate impetus to the document was President Truman's reaction to the events of 1949. These included the communist victory in China and the detonation, several years before Western analysts had predicted, of the first Soviet atomic bomb. In the wake of these events, Truman directed the National Security Council to analyze their implications, as well as those of possible American development of a thermonuclear weapon, which Truman was then considering. Assigned to this task was a special State and Defense Department study group headed by Paul Nitze. The group completed its work in February and March 1950 and delivered NSC 68 to President Truman in April of that year.

In terms of actual policy recommendations, NSC 68 called for increased defense spending, military aid on a global scale, civil defense measures, a campaign of psychological warfare against the Soviet Union and its satellites, and increased measures for internal security. These recommendations incorporated the elements of the termination by victory approach that had gradually taken shape in the Truman administration during the late forties. It drew heavily on NSC 20/4, a study that dated from 1948, and to some extent—although with important differences of emphasis—on Kennan's various assessments of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the assumptions and attitudes expressed in NSC 68 continued to hold sway into the early fifties and were shared to some extent by the new Republican administration and especially Secretary of State Dulles.

NSC 68 was clearly a product of its times. Its drafting, in early 1950, took place roughly at the same time that James R. Burnham's *The Coming Defeat of Communism* appeared and presented to the public the case for the adoption of a strategy of victory. According to an historian of the period (who also served in the Truman administration under Defense Secretaries Forrestal, Marshall, and Lovett), Burnham's "book struck profoundly sympathetic chords in important segments of the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency,

and among military planners at the Pentagon."⁵ Burnham offered the thesis that the West had to turn to the offensive for "if we do not smash the communist power, we shall cease to exist as a nation and a people."

The great inconsistency in Burnham's book, as in NSC 68, was that while it set forth explicit offensive goals for U.S. policy that could only have been achieved over a long period of time, it was pervaded by a fear of an imminent showdown with the Soviet adversary.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TERMINATION BY VICTORY

Some of the general assumptions about the USSR that have characterized termination by victory thinking are listed and discussed below.

1. The main source of the conflict is the Soviet drive for world domination.
2. Vertical conflicts throughout the world are largely mere appendages to the central horizontal conflict brought about by the Soviet drive for world domination. Therefore, no sharp distinction is made between stopping communism in third areas and containing Soviet expansionism in its own right.
3. Soviet ideological writings can be used literally to predict future Soviet behavior.
4. The Soviets intend to use military power as an instrument of expansion.
5. The United States should work to transform the USSR from within.
6. It is possible to drive a wedge between the Soviet people and the Soviet government.
7. It is necessary to develop "positions of strength" before negotiating with the Soviets.
8. Personal contacts between U.S. and Soviet leaders cannot improve relations. Indeed, they are only likely to be used by the Soviets to "trick" Western leaders, lulling gullible Western publics into complacency, and are thus best avoided. Because the Soviet leadership is monolithic, it is not logical to try to find or to influence hawk or dove factions within the Politburo.
9. Functional interdependencies such as trade and scientific ex-

⁵Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles*, Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, 1973, p. 118.

change are to be avoided. What is needed is a system of economic warfare that will hasten the overthrow of—or at least not in any way strengthen—the Soviet system.

10. The Soviet Union is an "outlaw" state that cannot be integrated into the international community.
11. There are important asymmetries between the United States and the Soviet Union that favor the latter in political and military tests of strength.

Sources of Conflict

NSC 68 attributed the causes of U.S.-Soviet rivalry to the unique characteristics of the communist adversary. This made the conflict qualitatively different from any interstate rivalry that had existed before: "[The] Soviet Union, unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world."⁶

Whereas the termination by accommodation school ascribed the source of the conflict to mistrust between the two sides, NSC 68 emphasized the fundamentally flawed nature of the adversary power itself, to which could be attributed Soviet aggressiveness: "[The] Kremlin is inescapably militant. It is inescapably militant because it possesses and is possessed by a world-wide revolutionary movement, because it is the inheritor of Russian imperialism, and because it is a totalitarian dictatorship."⁷ Unlike the Roosevelt and Hopkins view, NSC 68 did not envisage any prospect of severing the regime's aggressive international actions from its domestic order; a continuum existed between the two, with international actions growing out of internal characteristics.

This attitude toward conflict and the view of a unique adversary tended to unite—despite other dissimilarities—both hawks and doves of the termination schools. There was an underlying consistency between Roosevelt's view that the United States and the USSR could coexist in a natural state of harmony provided the USSR continued to evolve toward a convergence with the United States and the view that conflict, should it occur, was attributable to the defective nature of the Soviet system, which once corrected would enable restoration of the state of harmony. Thus it is not surprising that Dulles, like Harry Hopkins and Cordell Hull, attached significance to the traditional friendship between the Russian and American peoples, implying that there was something unnatural about the existing state of conflict:

⁶NSC 68, p. 237.

⁷Ibid., p. 246.

There's no direct quarrel between the people of the United States and the people of the Soviet Union. If it weren't for Soviet ambitions in other parts of the world, we would have no dispute. We are both self-sufficient to a large degree. The United States has no need to covet other territories. The Soviet Union has no logical need either to covet other territories, except out of ambition or a mistaken idea of national security. We have no tradition of war or animosity such as has plagued other countries like Germany and France. There has always been peace between the United States and the Soviet Union. We have a great admiration for their peoples' qualities of vigor and bravery and their achievements in literature.⁸

NSC 68's stress on the inherently defective nature of the Soviet Union has since become characteristic of most hard management thinking. It is reflected, for example, in Richard Pipes' assessment of the Soviet national character, or, in a different form, in Ronald Reagan's stress on the amorality of Marxism-Leninism:

[The Soviets] have said that the only morality—remember their ideology is without God, without our idea of morality in the religious sense—their statement about morality is that nothing is immoral if it furthers their cause, which means they can resort to lying or stealing or cheating or even murder if it furthers their cause. . . . Now, if we're going to deal with them, then we have to keep that in mind when we deal with them.⁹

Perceiving the Conflict as Horizontal Rather than Vertical

As the scope of Soviet activities in Eastern Europe became known, Roosevelt and Truman administration officials were forced to conclude that Stalin had not abandoned the practice of subverting legal governments as earlier had been believed. By this time, however, continuing Soviet internal subversion had become less important than the other new realities of the postwar age, notably the rise of Soviet military power and the Red Army's advance into Eastern and Central Europe. With its new military power and its geopolitical position, the USSR was in a position to mount a "horizontal" challenge to the United States and Britain, either in the form of a direct military attack on Western Europe, or by bringing about the demoralization of Western Europe through military intimidation. NSC 68 was primarily concerned with this aspect of the U.S.-Soviet, communist-free world struggle, which it saw as determining—independently of the

⁸Andrew H. Berding, *Dulles on Diplomacy*, D. Van Nostrand Company Inc., Princeton, N.J., 1965, p. 34.

⁹Interview with CBS-TV, March 3, 1981, from transcript in Department of State, *Bulletin*, March 9, 1981.

situation in Europe itself—whether the Western European countries would stand up to the Soviets or whether they would capitulate out of fear of Soviet might. Although it gave credit to the Marshall Plan for stopping the “dry rot of communism,” NSC 68 did not find that internal stabilization alone was sufficient to ward off the Soviet advance. Moreover, because of its primarily horizontal view of the Soviet challenge, NSC 68 was concerned that so little progress had been made in mobilizing European resources for military competition with the Soviet Union.

Among the contemporary hard managers, there is often an echo of this earlier emphasis on the horizontal and geopolitical challenge posed by the Soviet Union. Domestic instability is perceived as a function of Soviet power. This view was expressed succinctly by James Schlesinger: “The preponderance and proximity of Soviet military power increases Soviet capacity for influence and subversion.”¹⁰

A similar attitude was evident in Henry Kissinger’s 1979 assessment of the Soviet role in the fall of the Shah:

No one can claim that a Soviet decision started the upheavals that led to the departure of the Shah. But somebody who starts a rockslide nevertheless must be held responsible for the impact of the stones that he himself did not throw. To my mind the combination of Soviet actions in Ethiopia, South Yemen, Afghanistan, plus the general perception of an American geopolitical decline, had the consequence of demoralizing those whose stock in trade was co-operation with the United States, undermining their resolution towards potential revolutionaries. To what extent and within what margin, that is of course a question of speculation.¹¹

This contrasts with the soft managers’ tendency to follow the Roosevelt administration lead and to attribute local upheavals to communist activities—or the absence thereof—in discrete local settings.

The Predictive Value of Communist Ideology

NSC 68 ascribed Soviet hostility to the “fanatic faith” of the men in the Kremlin. It reflected the period’s increasingly widespread practice “of using ideology as a predictive instrument, of assuming that ideological orientation took precedence over other influences in determining the behavior of states and could be used as a basis upon which to anticipate their behavior.”¹² This interpretation, which stands in marked contrast to the Roosevelt administration’s only nodding

¹⁰James Schlesinger, “The Strategic Vortex,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Winter 1980, pp. 179-180.

¹¹Interview with Kissinger, *The Economist*, January 10, 1979.

¹²John Lewis Gaddis, “Containment: A Reassessment,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 4, July 1977, p. 883.

interest in ideology and its belief that ideology was on the wane, reached almost obsessive proportions with Dulles. In 1946 the future Secretary of State began a serious study of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Later he actually applied the knowledge gained from this study in his day-to-day conduct of U.S. foreign policy. According to a colleague who worked closely with him,

Dulles was quietly confident of his ability to handle his Soviet antagonists. This belief was partly based on the intense study he had given to the writings of communist leaders, particularly those of Lenin and Stalin. He had Stalin's *Problems of Leninism* on a small table just behind and to one side of his desk, alongside two other books to which he frequently referred—the Bible and the *Federalist Papers*. Frequently I saw him swivel around in his chair, pick up Stalin's volume, turn with surprising accuracy to close to what he was seeking, find the quotation and then say, "Now here's what Lenin says on this subject." I also saw him use quotations from Lenin to contradict a viewpoint Lenin's successors were trying to propagate. Dulles felt that his study of outstanding communist writings gave him a special insight into the thinking of communist rulers, and that he was therefore better able to counter their ambitions.¹³

Unlike the soft managers, who are more likely to dismiss Soviet ideology as a residual factor or as mere rhetoric, the hard managers continue to stress the importance of aggressive Soviet ideological pronouncements. For example, when asked about the Soviet leaders' intentions, Ronald Reagan gave this reply:

I don't have to think of an answer as to what their intentions are; they have repeated it. I know of no leader of the Soviet Union since the revolution, and including the present leadership, who has not, more than once, repeated in the various Communist congresses they hold their determination that their goal must be the promotion of world revolution and a one-world Socialist or Communist state, whichever word you want to use.¹⁴

The Role of Military Power as a Political Instrument

NSC 68 devoted much attention to the possibility of a premeditated attack on the West by the Red Army. "At any point in the process of demonstrating our will to make good our fundamental purpose, the Kremlin may decide to precipitate a general war, or in testing us, may go too far. These are risks we will invite by making ourselves strong, but they are lesser risks than those we seek to avoid."¹⁵ NSC 68 was

¹³Berding, *Dulles*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁴News conference of January 29, 1981, *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, February 2, 1981.

¹⁵NSC 68, p. 265.

also concerned with the demoralizing effect that even the possibility of such an attack had on America's European allies.

As the postwar period unfolded and as the destructive power of U.S. and Soviet nuclear arsenals grew, few U.S. officials continued to regard a premeditated Soviet attack as probable, which even NSC 68 had seen as at most a possibility. As termination thinking gave way to an emphasis on long-term management among American policy-makers, those with hard views shifted their attention away from the war-winning potential of military power and toward military power as an instrument of political intimidation. The hard managers have continued to stress what they see as a deliberate effort on the part of the Soviets to build up military power for political purposes. According to Richard Pipes, for example, the USSR maintains an

up-to-date military force capable of seizing opportunities which may present themselves along the Soviet Union's immensely long frontier or even beyond. The armed forces of the Soviet Union thus have much more to do than merely protect the country from potential aggressors: They are the mainstay of the regime's authority and a principal instrumentality of its internal and external policies.¹⁶

The hard managers also contend that the Soviet Union seeks nuclear superiority over the United States, again not so much because it desires war, but because it sees superiority as a useful tool for political intimidation.

Transforming the Soviet System from Within

It has been noted how in the early postwar period hopes for an accommodation with the Soviet Union were fostered by the belief that communism's external aggressiveness could be neatly severed from the internal characteristics of the Soviet regime. Roosevelt and Hopkins did not object to how the Soviets ran their own country, although they did object to Soviet efforts to impose a communist form of government on other countries. Secretaries of State Acheson and Dulles, by way of contrast, swung to the other extreme: They saw the domestic makeup of the Soviet state as inseparable from its international behavior. As a result, transformation of the Soviet system had to be an integral part of any strategy to stop Soviet expansion. NSC 68 clearly established the link between internal transformation of the Soviet system and the modification of Soviet external behavior. Accordingly, the document interpreted "containment" to mean a policy "which seeks by all means short of war to . . . so foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system that the Kremlin is brought at least to the

¹⁶Richard Pipes, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War," *Commentary*, Vol. 64, No. 1, July 1977, p. 29.

point of modifying its behavior to conform to generally accepted international standards."¹⁷

The goal of transforming the Soviet Union continues to be associated largely with the hard managers. Before assuming his official post, for example, Zbigniew Brzezinski told an interviewer that over the long term he believed that

some realistic encouragement of pluralism via nationalism and separatism may be our best answer to the Soviet challenge on the ideological front. . . . My hope would be that after the disappearance of the Soviet state, a combination of residual socialism and internationalism would mitigate the power-oriented ambitions of extreme Russian nationalism. . . . It has to be our objective to promote, no matter how marginally, that more acceptable alternative.¹⁸

The hard managers generally continue to accept the original containment (as well as the NSC 68) view that the internal transformation of the Soviet Union, to the extent that it is possible, can best be promoted by limiting Soviet external expansion, and forcing the Soviet leaders to look inward. This contrasts with the views of the soft managers, who have generally been more amenable to the Rooseveltian belief that transformation of the Soviet Union can be more readily accomplished by making sure that the Soviets do *not* look inward and by encouraging the USSR to play an active and constructive role in the outside world.

Driving a Wedge between the Soviet People and the Government

A strategy for achieving victory over the Soviet Union such as that outlined in NSC 68 is almost inevitably driven to embrace the objective of encouraging a split between the Soviet people and the regime. Because the regime is considered implacable and unchanging, efforts must be directed toward overthrowing it from below. Moreover, because the regime is seen as bent on external expansion to the detriment of its people's welfare, it is often assumed that the seething popular discontent can be turned against the government. According to NSC 68,

The greatest vulnerability of the Kremlin lies in the basic nature of its relations with the Soviet people.

That relationship is characterized by universal suspicion, fear and denunciation. It is a relationship in which the Kremlin relies, not

¹⁷NSC 68, p. 252.

¹⁸Interview in G. R. Urban, *Detente* (Temple, Smith, London, 1976), quoted in Coral Bell, "Virtue Unrewarded: Carter's Foreign Policy at Mid-Term," *International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 4, October 1978, p. 566.

only for its power but its very survival, on intricately devised mechanisms of coercion. The Soviet monolith is held together by the iron curtain around it and the iron bars within it, not by any force of natural cohesion. These artificial mechanisms of unity have never been intelligently challenged by a strong outside force. The full measure of their vulnerability is therefore not yet evident.¹⁹

As was noted above, one of the appealing features of a termination by victory was that it would eliminate over the long run the cost of sustaining an expensive rivalry with the Soviets. Even more appealing, from the perspective of cost, was the prospect of attaining such a victory with the help of the Soviet people. As NSC 68 stated, "clearly it will not only be less costly but more effective if [the fundamental change in the nature of the Soviet system] occurs to a maximum extent as a result of internal forces in Soviet society."²⁰

The same tendency to think of the Soviet people as a separate entity from the regime and to attempt to devise individual or parallel policies toward each is evident among the hard managers of the later postwar period. However, the stated objective of these policies is usually to frustrate the regime's external expansion, rather than to completely overthrow the leadership in Moscow. General Daniel Graham, for example, criticized the Nixon-Ford-Kissinger detente for not working to widen the regime-people split, which he saw as potentially useful in checking Soviet expansionism:

Is there another strategy available that can check Soviet expansionism and at the same time ensure that the struggle does not end in nuclear war? There is. Further, there is a strategy that in the long run will allow the West to deal one day with a Russian leadership no longer dedicated to the destruction of our political and economic institutions. Such a strategy would be based on the fundamental truth that our political and economic system is not only the best but the strongest, and that the Soviet tyranny is vulnerable over the long haul to internal pressures for change.

We should coordinate our strategy and our hopes with the aspirations of the Soviet people, not with the strategic goals of our common enemy—the power elite in Moscow. Our every action should be designed to maintain or, better, strengthen the forces for change inside the Soviet Union. We should not allow the Kremlin to claim victory over the West in the Third World. We should not provide the basis for propaganda claiming technical equality with us in space through joint ventures whose success depends upon superior U.S. technology. We should not soften the Voice of America. If we sell grain to the Soviets, we should make sure that every Soviet citizen knows it.²¹

¹⁹NSC 68, p. 247.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 241.

²¹Daniel O. Graham, "Detente Adieu," *National Review*, Vol. 28, No. 33, September 3, 1976, p. 950.

Negotiation and Positions of Strength

NSC 68 portrayed negotiations as a kind of terminal point to U.S.-Soviet relations, the point at which the Soviets, having been convinced of their inability to achieve their ends, would be ready to sit down and settle the outstanding issues. It did not view negotiations as one element in an overall relationship, which neither depended on nor precluded unilateral efforts (such as increased defense spending):

Ultimately, it is our objective to negotiate a settlement with the Soviet Union (or a successor state or states) on which the world can place reliance as an enforceable instrument of peace. But it is important to emphasize that such a settlement can only record the progress which the free world will have made in creating a political and economic system in the world so successful that the frustration of the Kremlin's design for world domination will be complete.

[The] only sure victory lies in the frustration of the Kremlin design by the steady development of the moral and material strength of the free world and its projection into the Soviet world in such a way as to bring about an internal change in the Soviet system.²²

In effect, negotiations were to be postponed to the indefinite future, while the United States built up to its never-quite-attained "position of strength." NSC 68 never made it clear whether the point was to convince the existing leadership that it must give up its expansionist policies and then negotiate, or whether halting the Soviet advance was simply an intermediate step toward liquidation of the Soviet regime, which would then make negotiations leading to a final settlement possible.

Short of this final settlement, NSC 68 did recommend continuing efforts to "negotiate" with the Soviets. It saw two advantages in negotiation: first, to score propaganda points against the Soviet Union and thereby build support for U.S. policies; and second, to use negotiation as a way of recording the progress made by the United States in its advance to a victory over the Soviets. NSC 68's picture of negotiations was thus one of a mechanistic progress toward a preordained goal:

The objectives of the United States and other free countries in negotiations with the Soviet Union (apart from the ideological objectives discussed above) are to record, in a formal fashion which will facilitate the consolidation and further advance of our position, the process of Soviet accommodation to the new political, psychological, and economic conditions in the world which will result from adoption of the fourth course of action and which will be supported by the increasing military strength developed as an integral part of that

²²NSC 68, p. 276.

course of action. In short, our objectives are to record, where desirable, the gradual withdrawal of the Soviet Union and to facilitate that process by making negotiation, if possible, always more expedient than resort to force.²³

The vagueness of the NSC 68 definition of the positions of strength policy meant that it could (and did) claim Kennan's "containment" as a precursor, although throughout the 1948-1950 period there had in fact been considerable friction between Kennan, as Director of Policy Planning, and Secretary of State Acheson over the question of negotiations with the Soviets. Acheson adopted—and in a sense went beyond—the NSC 68 view that serious negotiations were pointless as long as the Soviet political system remained unchanged. Indeed, negotiations might actually be harmful, because they could divert public attention from the dangers the Soviets posed and undermine efforts to prepare for a coming military showdown. As will be seen, this contrasted with Kennan's belief that limited negotiations were possible and that they might bring about a disengagement of the Soviets from Central Europe.

In the later postwar period, positions of strength has been a recurrent theme in American debates on policy toward the Soviet Union. Recently, its most notable advocates have been the Committee on the Present Danger, along with Ronald Reagan and Alexander Haig. According to the Committee,

Only prompt and prudent strategic initiatives can restore the adequacy and credibility of our fading second-strike deterrent capability. Only such action could demonstrate to the Soviet Union that the United States is determined to maintain forces and alliances fully adequate to deter attack or coercion by any rational group in the Kremlin against the United States, its allies and its important national interests. And only such action could persuade the Soviet Union to negotiate and accept a fair, balanced and verifiable SALT II agreement.²⁴

As in this quote, recent references to positions of strength have usually been made in the context of the SALT negotiations and of efforts to correct what is seen as a strategic imbalance, rather than in the NSC 68 context of attempts to force the Soviet Union into "negotiating a settlement." This change reflects the more limited objectives of a hard management as opposed to the earlier termination by victory approach to U.S.-Soviet relations.

²³Ibid., p. 274.

²⁴Committee on the Present Danger, *Is America Becoming No. 2?* October 5, 1978, p. 42.

Personal Relations

In contrast with the earlier preoccupation with personalities, NSC 68 made no mention of the influence of individual leaders, American or Soviet, on the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Its emphasis was on the unavoidable clash of ideals and systems. There was no suggestion in NSC 68 that changes in leadership, or changes in the perceptions of existing leaders, could mitigate the intense rivalry of the two systems. In this regard, NSC 68 was very much a product of its times, and of the extreme disillusionment in the American public that resulted from the experiences at Yalta and Potsdam. In light of the experiences at these conferences, diplomats such as Acheson had developed an almost morbid suspiciousness about direct dealings with the Soviets. Dulles later did much to restore some credibility to efforts to negotiate with the Soviets, but he did so only by emphasizing how tricky they were and how necessary it was to apply to the task the skills of a John Foster Dulles.

Although in the later postwar period American leaders have become less afraid of being tricked by the Soviets, the hard managers have retained a certain wariness of summitry, of the way in which the Soviets use summit meetings for propaganda purposes, and of the often unrealistic expectations that summits arouse in the public. Alexander Haig, for example, explained the Reagan administration position in these terms:

The President's view on summitry is that summitry for its own sake can be self-deluding and can result in euphoric expectations which quite often historically have not been realized. So he believes that summitry must be preceded by the most careful preparation on every one of the issues which are likely to arise, and that there is some indication that that summitry would result in progress.²⁵

The hard managers have also been unreceptive to the argument, often associated with the soft managers, that there are hawkish and dovish factions in the Politburo. They tend to regard the Soviet leadership as more monolithic than do the soft managers, and are less willing to entertain suggestions that the United States should alter its policies in deference to potentially dovish elements in the Soviet leadership.

Functional Interdependencies

NSC 68 did not recommend the creation of functional interdependencies such as trade and arms control between the United States and

²⁵Interview, *Wall Street Journal*, July 9, 1981.

the Soviet Union. Apart from endorsing an embargo on trade in goods with a potential military significance, it made no mention of trade.

In the later postwar period, the hard managers have continued to stress the role that East-West trade and technology transfer play in building up Soviet military power. Haig, for example, echoing Lenin's famous phraseology, warned U.S. allies that they should be concerned that they were "not handing the Marxist system the rope with which to hang the Western world."²⁶

Integration of the USSR into the International Community

NSC 68 clearly emphasized the "outlaw" relationship of the Soviet Union toward the international community. It did not put faith in the UN as a place where East-West issues could be resolved. The principles of the UN Charter were interpreted as an indictment of the Soviet Union, rather than an invitation to the Soviet Union to participate more actively in the international community. Similarly, functional organizations, such as GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and IMF (International Monetary Fund), were stressed for their value in strengthening various allied countries against Soviet expansionism rather than integrating the Soviets into the world economic system.

In recent years, as "world order" thinking has focused less on the political aspects of the UN and more on functional cooperation in solving global problems, hard management critics have remained skeptical of attempts to integrate the Soviet "outlaw," and have argued instead the unsuitability of the Soviet Union for cooperative efforts in third areas. This is evident in the following remarks of Senator Moynihan, directed at Carter administration efforts to involve the USSR in global issues:

Where, I asked in particular, was there any evidence that the Soviets actually would cooperate with us in the developing world? I continued:

The President, in my view, is entirely correct in the fresh emphasis he has given to what we call North-South relations. But I wish to suggest that this must not be allowed to divert us from the reality of the military and ideological competition with the Soviet Union which continues and, if anything, escalates. . . . If we genuinely care about the developing world, then we must look to the behavior of the Soviet Union, for with respect to the non-Communist regions of the world,

²⁶Interview with ABC-TV, quoted in the *New York Times*, July 20, 1981.

be they developed or underdeveloped, there is one Soviet policy: the worse the better. I speak from what is no longer a brief experience of international affairs. In nation after nation, at conference after conference, what the Soviets seek is failure, breakdown, bitterness, mistrust. They judge that they thrive on this, and history certainly does not disprove them. *Our* task is twofold. First, to see this ourselves. It is not necessarily a confidence-building exercise, but it is indispensable. Second, to bring the developing nations to see it as well. This is never easy. It is at times excruciatingly painful, and ensures a good deal of near-term obloquy. But it is the true measure of commitment.²⁷

Several years earlier, George Ball had directed a similar attack on the Nixon-Kissinger detente:

If there is any substantial leverage in detente, we would be foolish not to insist, as a condition to our continuing to act out the charade, that the Soviets cease undercutting American initiatives designed to deal with urgent world problems. If they are not willing to do so, we should rigorously reexamine all aspects of Soviet-American relations. Why should we help the Soviet Union improve its absurdly inefficient economy with our capital and technology, why should we sell grain to meet the food deficits created by its ridiculous agriculture system, and why should we collaborate to give it world recognition as a super-power, so long as it perversely frustrates every sensible initiative to deal with world problems that are as dangerous to the Soviet Union as to ourselves? Have we grown so accustomed to its mulish opposition that we have lost our capacity for outrage and with it our sense of perspective? Why should we sit calmly by when Soviet spokesmen proclaim that the danger of overpopulation is an imperialist bogeyman and that, but for the capitalist greed, there would be ample food for everyone, no matter how rapidly the world population might continue to grow—chutzpah of epic dimensions from a richly endowed nation that can no longer even feed itself because its agricultural system is a dismal fiasco.

Only by dispersing the fog of wishful thinking and self-deception created by mindless chatter of detente can we even begin to comprehend the fundamental question, much less the answer that should shape our own policy: can we, by pumping technology and capital into the lagging Soviet economy, feeding the Soviet people, and building up the Soviet state as equal to America in the eyes of the world, effectively transform a revolutionary power into a legitimate status quo power?²⁸

²⁷Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "A New American Foreign Policy," *The New Republic*, February 9, 1980. Moynihan is quoting his own speech at Baruch College, City College of New York.

²⁸George W. Ball, *Diplomacy for a Crowded World*, Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, 1976, pp. 123-124.

Asymmetries between the United States and the Soviet Union

The feeling that the Soviet Union's totalitarian domestic order gave it important advantages over the United States in the international arena permeated NSC 68:

Combining [opportunism] with the elements of secrecy, the Kremlin possesses a formidable capacity to act with the widest tactical latitude, with stealth and speed. . . .

In coping with dictatorial governments acting in secrecy and with speed, we are also vulnerable in that the democratic process necessarily operates in the open and at a deliberate tempo. Weaknesses in our situation are readily apparent and subject to immediate exploitation. This Government therefore cannot afford in the face of the totalitarian challenge to operate on a narrow margin of strength.²⁹

At the same time, NSC 68 recognized that there were counterbalancing asymmetries that favored the United States—particularly a more productive economy and support from major allies. It recommended drawing on these relative advantages to a greater extent to neutralize the Soviet Union's "totalitarian" advantage, both by increasing U.S. military spending and urging European allies to do likewise.

The hard managers have continued to emphasize factors such as Soviet secrecy and the Soviet ability to devote relatively larger shares of gross national product to the military. They see these as justifying what Ronald Reagan referred to as the "margin of safety," which the United States is felt to require. In contrast, the soft managers more often stress Soviet disadvantages precisely as a way of arguing *against* measures such as increased defense spending.

²⁹NSC 68, p. 246.

IV. THE MANAGEMENT CRITIQUE

THE APPEAL

As noted previously, the prospect of long-term management of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry has not been particularly appealing to U.S. officials and the general public. This rivalry is expensive and sometimes dangerous. Equally important, the idea of an open-ended conflict with another power seems to go against the grain of traditional American thinking on international relations. If, as Americans have had a tendency to ask, the United States and the USSR are engaged in a mortal struggle, what should the United States be doing to assure that it will win this struggle? If, on the other hand, there is no prospect for victory by either side, then why is it not possible for the two sides to get together, settle their differences, and proceed to lower their defense budgets and begin to cooperate for mutual economic benefit?

Part of George Kennan's achievement was to explain to the American public that both of these seemingly contradictory facts were true—that the United States and the USSR were locked in a deadly rivalry, but that victory for one side or the other—especially military victory—was most unlikely. Kennan's experiences in Moscow and his in-depth knowledge of Russian history and of Marxist-Leninist ideology led him to conclude that the USSR would continue to be hostile to the United States. At the same time, however, he could not conceive, in practical terms, what victory for one side or the other would actually mean. As he later wrote in his *Memoirs*,

in a war between the United States and the Soviet Union, there could be no complete military victory. Neither country was occupiable by the forces of the other. Both were simply too large, too different—linguistically, culturally, and in every other way. Nor was it in the tradition or the psychology of the Soviet leaders to surrender to an adversary who had occupied any sizable portion of their territory.¹

As noted in the Introduction, most U.S. officials, in the later post-war period, while perhaps still attracted by the idea of a termination of the conflict with the Soviet Union, have come to accept the idea of an open-ended rivalry, especially since the development of nuclear arsenals by each side has for most officials made even more problematic the question of how to define "victory" for one side or another in this rivalry.

¹Kennan, *Memoirs: 1950-1963*, Little, Brown, & Co., Inc., Boston, 1972, pp. 95-96.

GEORGE KENNAN AND CONTAINMENT AS PROTOTYPE

Throughout his long career as a participant in and observer of U.S.-Soviet relations, George Kennan often remarked on the difficulty that the United States had in pursuing a steady, realistic policy toward the Soviet Union. While his recent critics have characterized him as a one-time hawk who became a dove, Kennan himself has interpreted his role as that of trying to prevent what he saw as the excessive swings in U.S. policy and of encouraging what he felt was an even-handed approach to relations with the Soviet Union. As he expressed it:

[The] effort to pursue a balanced and useful middle course in the relationship with Russia has never been an easy one for American policymakers to follow; and one of the main reasons why this has been so difficult is that seldom, if ever, have we had an adequate consensus in American opinion on the nature of the problem and the most promising ways of approaching it. Prior to the late 1940s—prior, that is, to the Korean War and the death of Stalin—the difficulty seemed to come primarily from the left: from people who had a naive, overtrusting, overridealistic view of what was then Stalinist power—people who thought it really possible for this country to ingratiate itself with the Stalin regime by various one-sided gestures of confidence and generosity and reproached our government for not doing so. It was, incidentally, against this sort of left-wing deviation that the "X-article" and the policy of containment, were directed. . . .

But since Stalin's death, the opposition to an even-handed and realistic policy toward Russia has tended to come from the opposite end of the political spectrum: from people who were unable to see the curious mix of the negative and the positive, of the discouraging and the hopeful, in the Soviet political personality—people who could see only the negative, and who feared the consequences of anything less than a total rejection and hostility from our side.²

In recent years Kennan has ceased to exert a major influence on U.S. policy and has been widely criticized for failing to address some of the most immediate concerns of U.S. policymakers, notably the Soviet military buildup. As is evident in the foregoing passage, Kennan himself admits that since the time of Stalin's death, his tendency was to see the "opposition to an even-handed and realistic policy toward Russia" as coming from one direction only—namely, the right.

²Kennan, "Needed: A New American View of the USSR," in Fred Warner Neal (ed.), *Detente or Debacle. Common Sense in U.S.-Soviet Relations*, W. W. Norton, New York, 1979, p. 31. The "X-article" to which Kennan refers is his anonymously written "Sources of Soviet Conduct," which appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947. This article has long been regarded by historians as the seminal document of American postwar containment policy, although precisely what Kennan meant or implied by containment is a matter of dispute.

Be that as it may, in the early postwar period Kennan did provide, often with support from colleagues such as Charles Bohlen, what was in essence a single coherent response to the two termination policies that had been proposed, first by the Roosevelt administration at the end of the war and then by elements in the Truman administration on the eve of the Korean War.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Although the critique varied in tone, depending on whether it was addressed to a Harry Hopkins or a Paul Nitze, a number of general recommendations surface to form what is called here the management approach to dealing with the Soviet Union:

1. The sources of conflict are structural and geopolitical. Ideology and national characteristics may exacerbate the conflict, but rivalry would persist under any Soviet (or Russian) regime. The inherently geopolitical nature of the U.S.-Soviet relationship means that in the conduct of policy, ideological and personal factors will rarely, if ever, override fundamental national interests.
2. The adversary remains to some extent motivated by ideology. As a result, he continues to predict the demise of "imperialism." However, it is necessary to maintain a distinction between what a communist wishes will happen, and what in fact is possible.
3. The possibility of the Soviet Union deliberately launching a third world war to achieve its political ends is most unlikely. Moreover, to the extent that Western policy is geared solely to this possibility, it weakens the West's ability to deal with less catastrophic, but far more likely, contingencies.
4. Transforming the Soviet system should not be an object of U.S. policy. First, this is an unrealistic goal, and second, it would not eliminate the geopolitical-national interest sources of U.S.-Soviet rivalry. What such a policy goal does do is to make coherent management of the U.S.-Soviet relationship more difficult.
5. There is no point in the United States attempting to split the Soviet regime from the people. The emphasis is on dealing in a businesslike way with the Soviet government.
6. Personal relations between leaders (e.g., summits) may be useful as a means of communicating vital interests, and in

helping to eliminate misperceptions about such interests. There is no possibility, however, of altering basic Soviet perceptions by "talking out" differences. Similarly, while it is sensible to recognize that factions do exist within the Soviet leadership—whether labeled hawks, doves, or in any other fashion—and that U.S. policy should be ready, if the opportunity arises, to appeal to one faction or another, change in the relative strength of any faction cannot alter the fundamental character of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry.

7. Negotiations between two parties must proceed from a recognition of the relative bargaining position each side brings to the table. Talks will not transform a weak position into a strong one, and vice versa. It is better to negotiate from existing positions and get the best agreement possible, rather than put off negotiations until an illusory position of strength is attained.
8. The effects of trade and functional interdependencies on U.S.-Soviet rivalry are likely to be modest. Economic interest will not induce the Soviets to make the kind of fundamental political concessions to the United States that could lead to a termination by accommodation. Similarly, no amount of boycott or economic warfare on the part of the United States and its allies will be sufficient to force the Soviets into making these concessions.
9. The Soviet Union is not interested in helping the United States solve "world order" problems such as postwar reconstruction, international development, or establishment of a stable international monetary system. Involvement with the USSR on world order projects is not likely to lead either to the more rapid solution of these problems or to a lessening of the hostility and mistrust between the two countries.
10. The Soviet challenge is both horizontal and vertical, and U.S. policy must respond to different aspects of the challenge by different means.

Sources of Conflict

In his writings of the 1944-1947 period, Kennan tried to provide a more realistic perspective of the Soviet Union and the nature and objectives of its leadership than that which was current in the Roosevelt administration. He hoped thereby to convince officials in Washington that they would indeed face a long-term problem in dealing with the Soviets. In doing so, Kennan laid a heavy stress on both the

national character and the ideological sources of Soviet hostility toward the West.

In Kennan's assessment, the relationship between nationalism and ideology was the inverse of that assumed by officials in Washington. Although these officials viewed the "nationalization" of Soviet policy as a hopeful sign, Kennan saw little cause for optimism in a reassertion of the Russian nationalist tradition, which he saw as one of internal repression and external expansion. In 1946 he wrote that

Historically, the foreign affairs of Russia have developed along lines entirely different from those of the United States. Our most important foreign relations, historically speaking, have been along the lines of peaceable overseas trade. These have set the pattern of our thinking on foreign affairs. The Russians, throughout their history, have dealt principally with fierce hostile neighbors. Lacking natural geographical barriers, they have had to develop, in order to deal with these neighbors, a peculiar technique (now become traditional and almost automatic) of elastic advance and retreat, of defense in depth, of secretiveness, of wariness, of deceit. Their history has known many armistices between hostile forces; but it has never known an example of the permanent peaceful coexistence of two neighboring states with established borders accepted without question by both peoples. The Russians therefore have no conception of permanent friendly relations between states.³

Whereas the administration saw an ideological commitment to subversion as problematic but not insurmountable, Kennan saw ideology and its organizational expression, the international communist movement, as instruments that were being used to further traditional Russian national interests. Whereas the administration saw the possibility of neatly separating Russia's external subversive activities from its internal order, Kennan was convinced that these activities were in themselves symptoms of a more deeply rooted hostility toward the West. In emphasizing the depth of the sources of conflict, Kennan formulated positions that have since been used by others to argue against optimism about an early termination of conflict with the Soviet Union.

As was seen a few years after the X article, however, when the mass of public and elite opinion had swung to an opposite extreme, the emphasis Kennan and others had placed on the national sources of Soviet hostility cut two ways: On one hand it guaranteed a certain wariness of Soviet intentions, and on the other it ruled out uncritical acceptance of the view that the Soviet leaders were bent on a plan of world conquest in the service of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Kennan had in fact always believed that Stalin was motivated more by insecurity and a desire not to risk what he had than by a desire for more

³Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, p. 560.

territory. Charles Bohlen, who shared many of Kennan's views on these questions, made much the same point in his criticism of NSC 68:

Soviet policy was presented as nothing more than an absolute determination to spread the Communist system throughout the world. As I have said before, even in those days I was convinced that the Soviet Union, as far as its own actions went, was largely motivated by its interests as a national state, and that the idea of spreading Communism was secondary to such considerations. The main Bolshevik aim is to protect the Soviet system, above all in Russia and secondarily in the satellite countries. The extension of Communism to other areas is a theoretical and secondary goal.⁴

In addition to his work in pioneering American understanding of the USSR as both a Russian and a Marxist-Leninist power, Kennan exercised an influence on U.S. foreign policy as a theorist of international relations. As such, Kennan foreshadowed the "realist" or Realpolitik school of international relations that later came to be associated with Hans Morgenthau. Like Morgenthau, Kennan stressed the inevitability of change and of conflict. He was skeptical of the American tendency to regard international law or organizations such as the UN as capable of eliminating conflict, which he saw as rooted in genuine clashes of national interest. As he wrote in his *Memoirs*,

International political life is something organic, not something mechanical. Its essence is change; and the only systems for the regulation of international life which can be effective over long periods of time are ones sufficiently subtle, sufficiently pliable, to adjust themselves to constant change in the interests and power of the various countries involved.⁵

While most Americans assumed that nations came into conflict because of "national character" or "mistrust," Kennan recognized the geopolitical bases for international conflict and felt that in the post-war period these were sufficient to promote continued rivalry between the United States and the USSR as the remaining great powers.⁶ He thus wrote about both causes of U.S.-Soviet conflict—on one hand,

⁴Bohlen, *Witness to History*, p. 290.

⁵Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, p. 218.

⁶His opinion was shared by Walter Lippmann, who as early as 1943 was arguing that the tradition of U.S.-Russian friendship, to which Americans with views as different as Hopkins and Dulles often alluded, had now become irrelevant, because it had been the product of geopolitical circumstances that no longer obtained. Lippmann emphasized the importance of changed circumstances, hoping thereby to demonstrate to the American people the fallacy of believing that once the Germans and Japanese were defeated, all international problems would be solved: "Russian-American relations will no longer be controlled by the historic fact that each is for the other a potential friend in the rear of its potential enemies. Russia will, on the contrary, be the greatest power in the rear of our indispensable friends. . . ." *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*, Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, 1943, p. 145.

stressing the inherent qualities that tended to make the USSR an aggressive power, and on the other recognizing that the Soviet Union was similar to other great powers who had played the game of global power politics.

In subsequent years U.S. foreign policy elites have adopted both elements of Kennan's thought, but at times with different emphasis. As noted above, the hard managers have continued to stress the inherent defects of the USSR as a state, while Kissinger and Nixon, in their efforts at detente with the Soviet Union, have downplayed these factors in their attempt to place U.S.-Soviet relations in the framework of traditional great power rivalries. In either case, the conclusion is similar to that of George Kennan: U.S.-Soviet rivalry is deep-seated and long-term, and must therefore be managed rather than wished away.

Dealing with the Revolutionary Adversary's Ideology

Kennan recognized that part of the challenge of managing the conflict with the Soviets was dealing with their pronouncements on the eventual triumph of communism throughout the world. It has been noted how during the early postwar period views on ideology tended to gravitate to either one of two extremes. Initially, the termination by accommodation school dismissed ideology as a "residual," a product for domestic consumption rather than a major determinant (or even indicator) of Soviet policy. A few years later, the termination by victory school swung to the other extreme, taking ideology literally, that is, as an operational plan for world conquest and by extension the determinant of the U.S. response to Soviet behavior.⁷ A similar swing from one extreme view to the other occurred between the late sixties, when ideology was interpreted as a defensive response to China, and the late seventies, when it was again being seriously considered, in conjunction with Soviet military doctrine, as a key to aspects of Soviet military planning.

Rejecting both of these tendencies, Kennan sought to avoid the stark choice between ignoring Soviet ideology or taking it as an operational plan. He did so by outlining the broader context in which the men in the Kremlin made their ideological pronouncements and by

⁷This is an instance in which it is almost impossible to separate changes in U.S. attitudes brought about by changes in the USSR from the vicissitudes of the U.S. debate on the "essential" character of the Soviet system. There *was* a significant difference between Stalin's wartime downplaying of ideology and the excessive dogmatism some years later under Zhdanov, and it is understandable that NSC 68 would reflect this change. Nonetheless, this report contends that the "logic" of the termination by victory approach would in any case dictate a closer attention to Soviet ideological pronouncements.

attempting to understand the Soviet leadership's image of the USSR as an "agent of history." As such, the Soviet leaders did not admit the existence of conflict between their own revolutionary aspirations and the course of history itself. But as Kennan stressed, this did not mean that those in the West who could step out of this conceptual framework were equally obliged to see the USSR as unequivocally on the side of history. Kennan had already pointed this out in the X article:

But if ideology convinces the rulers of Russia that truth is on their side . . . those of us on whom that ideology has no claim are free to examine objectively the validity of that premise. The Soviet thesis not only implies complete lack of control by the West over its own economic destiny, it likewise assumes Russian unity, discipline and patience over an infinite period. Let us bring this apocalyptic vision down to earth. . . .⁸

Kennan argued that managing the U.S.-Soviet conflict would require maintaining a distinction between subjective Soviet expectations about reality and the objective course of reality itself. In his view, there was no contradiction between the Soviet Union's ultimate revolutionary expectations and its immediate need to protect, with a high degree of caution when it came to potential conflict with the West, the existing gains of socialism. In Kennan's words,

we are going to continue for a long time to find the Russians difficult to deal with. It does not mean that they should be considered as embarked upon a do-or-die program to overthrow our society by a given date. The theory of the inevitability of the eventual fall of capitalism has the fortunate connotation that there is no hurry about it. The forces of progress can take their time in preparing the final coup de grace. Meanwhile, what is vital is that the "Socialist fatherland"—that oasis of power which has been already won for Socialism in the person of the Soviet Union—should be cherished and defended by all good Communists at home and abroad, its fortunes promoted, its enemies badgered and confounded. The promotion of premature, "adventuristic" revolutionary projects abroad which might embarrass Soviet power in any way would be an inexcusable, even a counter-revolutionary act. The cause of Socialism is the support and promotion of Soviet power, as defined in Moscow.⁹

Most subsequent managers of U.S.-Soviet relations have followed Kennan in maintaining a distinction between what the Soviets would like to happen and what circumstances are actually likely to permit. Zbigniew Brzezinski, for example, when asked in his capacity as National Security Adviser about the ultimate intentions of the Soviet Union, gave the following reply:

⁸"Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4, July 1947, reprinted in George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy: 1900-1950*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill., 1951, p. 120.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

I would say ... that the Soviet Union, because of its ideological predisposition, tends to view the world as moving toward certain preordained changes. It expects them. It may not be as active in effecting them as it was in an earlier revolutionary phase, but it has a view of history which colors its perception of change, its expectations....

I think the Soviet leadership expects a world that will be communized. It expects it historically....

We are in for a long historical competition in which we have to be steadfast, determined, and not shy about our ideals or what we have...¹⁰

Although this practice of making a distinction between ideology and reality has become, in effect, the quintessential management position, shared to some degree by both hard and soft managers, there are important differences of emphasis within this broad consensus. The hard managers generally emphasize the Soviet Union's long-term aspirations, as expressed in its propagandistic and its ideological pronouncements, while the soft managers are more likely to stress the marginal effect of ideology on the day-to-day conduct of the Soviet policy, and the wide gap between ideological claims and actual achievements.

Possibility of Military Attack

NSC 68's recommendations emerged in spite of the objections of Soviet experts such as Kennan and Bohlen who, it will be recalled, a few years earlier had been arguing that the United States was not sufficiently aware of the danger that the Soviet Union posed. What these experts were concerned with, however, was what they perceived as a Soviet political challenge rather than a military attack. Kennan took particular exception to the view that there was any imminent threat of war in Western Europe, and was dismayed by the widespread view that not only were the Soviets embarking on a plan of military conquest under the banner of socialism, but that they were doing so under a rigid timetable. As Kennan notes in his memoirs,

The German-Nazi syndrome still dominated people's minds. The attack in Korea, even though Soviet troops were not involved, was viewed as another "Austria"—as the first move in a supposed "grand design" of world conquest.

[Our] military—and to some extent our political—planners had adopted for military planning purposes, against my anguished objec-

¹⁰"Face the Nation," CBS-TV, October 30, 1977, in Department of State, *Bulletin*, Vol. 47, No. 2006, December 5, 1977, p. 802.

tions, the year 1952 as the probable "peak" of danger which our preparations should be designed to meet. They did not themselves intend to start a war at that time, but they assumed there would be a real danger of the Russians doing so as soon as their current program of military preparations was completed—and for this, 1952, apparently, seemed to them the most likely date. They could not free themselves from the image of Hitler and his timetables. They viewed the Soviet leaders as absorbed with the pursuit of something called a "grand design"—a design for the early destruction of American power and for world conquest. In vain I pleaded with people to recognize that this was a chimera: that the Russians were not like that; that they were weaker than we supposed; that they had many internal problems of their own; that they had no "grand design" and did not intend, in particular, to pursue their competition with us by means of a general war. What we were confronted with from the Soviet side was, I insisted, a long-term effort of rivalry and pressure by means short of general war.¹¹

It is worth noting, in passing, Acheson's perspective of the controversy:

In the State Department itself we ran into a stultifying and, so I thought, sterile argument between the Planning Staff and the Soviet experts. The latter challenged the belief which I shared with the planners that the Kremlin gave top priority to world domination in scheme of things. They contended that we attributed more of a Trotskyite than Leninist view to Stalin and that he placed the survival of the regime and "communism in one country" far ahead of world revolution. . . .¹²

As before, when Kennan took the position that suspicion about negotiations hindered realistic efforts to disengage the Soviets from Central Europe, he now argued that the fear of imminent military attack would exert the same paralyzing influence on U.S. diplomacy. In challenging the views of Nitze's Planning Staff, Kennan contended that the Soviets were committed *both* to expanding their own power and to avoiding a major war. This assessment has since become a general feature of the management view. It stands in contrast with the different schools of termination thinking that have at times either denied the reality of the Soviet imperative to expand, or, at the other extreme, contended that the Soviets would contemplate launching a major war at any cost to achieve their objectives.

Although Kennan's mixed assessment of the role of military power in Soviet policy has come to prevail in U.S. foreign policy circles, the differences on this issue between the hard and soft managers are par-

¹¹Kennan, *Memoirs: 1950-1963*, pp. 91-92.

¹²Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1969, pp. 752-753.

ticularly sharp. The hard managers have tended to stress the magnitude of the Soviet military buildup and to see evidence of a calculated Soviet effort to use military power to expand the Soviet sphere of political control. The soft managers, in contrast, have tended both to downplay the size of the buildup and to ascribe Soviet motives less to expansionist impulses than to such factors as fear of encirclement and a desire to overcome previous military deficiencies in attempting to draw even with the United States.

Transformation of the Soviet System as an Object of U.S. Policy

Consistent with his concern that U.S. policy be guided by a clear picture of what it could realistically hope to accomplish, Kennan was skeptical of the view that the United States could bring about the internal transformation of the Soviet system. Unlike his superiors in Washington, Kennan had firsthand knowledge of the regime's ability to insulate Russia from external influences. In addition, he believed that even if it proved easier to foster change in the USSR than he thought possible, it did not necessarily follow that this was a proper object for U.S. policy, especially because it was unlikely that a democratic or a friendly regime would replace the existing one.

It has already been noted how NSC 68 seized upon Kennan's term "containment" and used it to support its own recommendation that the United States pursue a policy aimed at transforming the Soviet internal order. To be sure, the X article did contain a stirring passage that seemed to support this conclusion:

[The] United States has it in its power to increase enormously the strains under which Soviet policy must operate, to force upon the Kremlin a far greater degree of moderation and circumspection than it has had to observe in recent years, and in this way to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.¹³

As Kennan later tried to explain, however, the authors of NSC 68 and others who drew on this passage interpreted it in almost precisely the opposite sense that Kennan had intended. Divorced from the overall conception of the USSR that Kennan set forth, phrases like "break-up" and "gradual mellowing of Soviet power" were inserted into a more activist framework that was foreign to Kennan's original thinking.

There was, in short, a logical consistency in Kennan's concept of containment that was lost as its elements were adopted piecemeal by other policymakers. Kennan argued that because the Soviets believed

¹³"Sources of Soviet Conduct," p. 127.

that history was on their side, they were relatively easy to deter—to “contain” was his term. And, he went on, the longer they were contained, the wider would be the gap between their perception of history (i.e., Marxism-Leninism) and the reality in which they actually found themselves. It was the perception of this widening gap between ideology and reality, rather than activist measures such as “psychological warfare,” that would result in the “gradual mellowing.” Once Soviet expansion had been halted, Kennan believed that a process of decay and disillusionment would evolve within the Soviet Union, which would happen irrespective of what the United States attempted. He did not recommend that the United States should, or claim that it could, hasten this process. What the United States could do was to demonstrate, by force of example, to the world and to the Soviet people that an attractive alternative existed. In Kennan’s words,

It is entirely possible for the United States to influence by its actions the internal developments, both within Russia and throughout the international Communist movement, by which Russian policy is largely determined. This is not only a question of the modest measure of informational activity which this government can conduct in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, although that, too, is important. It is rather a question of the degree to which the United States can create among the peoples of the world generally the impression of a country which knows what it wants, which is coping successfully with the problems of its internal life and with the responsibilities of a World Power, and which has a spiritual vitality capable of holding its own among the major ideological currents of the time. To the extent that such an impression can be created and maintained, the aims of Russian Communism must appear sterile and quixotic, the hopes and enthusiasm of Moscow’s supporters must wane, and added strain must be imposed on the Kremlin’s foreign policies. For the palsied decrepitude of the capitalist world is the keystone of Communist philosophy.¹⁴

What Kennan was recommending was in a sense the opposite of “mirror-imaging”—the view that the United States needed to adopt Soviet methods to counter the Soviet threat—that figured prominently in NSC 68. He believed that the greater the real and apparent differences between the two systems, the more effect this would have in discrediting the Soviet system:

The issue of Soviet-American relations is in essence a test of the over-all worth of the United States as a nation among nations. To avoid destruction the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions and prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation.¹⁵

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 126-127.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 127.

Thus, in Kennan's view of containment, the U.S. role in promoting change within the Soviet Union was essentially passive: It consisted of providing "information" and offering an attractive alternative model of society, the mere existence of which would over time undermine the more objectionable aspects of the Soviet system. The "passivity" that Kennan recommended was realistic, however, only under certain assumptions about how change occurred—or indeed that it could occur at all—within the Soviet system. Although the doctrine of containment made these assumptions, Kennan never explicitly spelled out what they were, except to say that "no mystical, Messianic movement—and particularly not that of the Kremlin—can face frustration indefinitely without eventually adjusting itself in one way or another to the logic of that state of affairs."¹⁶

Here Kennan's concept of containment—or at least his assumptions about how it would gradually lead to internal change within the Soviet Union—encounters a seeming contradiction: While Kennan emphasized the "national character" sources of Soviet conduct, when predicting change within the USSR, he seemed to shift his emphasis to "ideology" as a set of predictions about the future that could be proved false. It was this discrediting over time that Kennan believed could lead to a "gradual mellowing" of the Soviet system. Having posited that Soviet behavior was motivated by national factors that had changed little over even hundreds of years, to be consistent Kennan would have had to conclude that fundamental change in the Soviet Union required not only the discrediting of an ideology but also the transformation of an entire national character. This discrepancy does not invalidate the logic of Kennan's argument, but in practical terms it meant that change in the Soviet Union was likely to be so slow as to have no direct implications for U.S. policy other than to counsel patience. Indeed, many of the national "sources of Soviet conduct" that Kennan pointed to in 1947 later became, in the hands of Richard Pipes and others, arguments for the conclusion that the Soviet Union was essentially unchangeable.

As the cold war progressed, the U.S. foreign policy community gradually came to accept Kennan's pessimistic view of prospects for the internal transformation of the Soviet Union. In addition, academic writers such as Henry Kissinger began to question the very logic of a strategy for dealing with an adversary that was in effect premised upon certain assumptions about the ultimate transformation of that adversary:

But an even more important point is raised by the speculations regarding Soviet intentions: the degree to which we can afford to gear

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 127-128.

our policy to assumptions regarding the possible transformation of Soviet society. The test of policy is its ability to provide for the worst contingency; it can always escape its dilemmas by relying on history or the good will of the opposing states. A wise policy will keep under its own control all factors essential to survival. It will not count too much on changes in domestic structures of other states, particularly of avowedly revolutionary powers like the USSR or Communist China where both the historical record and the often-repeated proclamations should inspire caution.¹⁷

Later, the Nixon administration explicitly repudiated the idea that an object of U.S. policy should be the internal transformation of the Soviet Union. As Kissinger wrote in the President's foreign policy report for 1970,

The internal order of the USSR, as such, is not an object of our policy, although we do not hide our rejection of many of its features. Our relations with the USSR, as with other countries, are determined by its international behavior. Consequently, the fruitfulness of the relationship depends significantly upon the degree to which its international behavior does not reflect militant doctrinal considerations.

... I recognize there is a certain connection between domestic policy and foreign policy. But if we adopt as a national proposition the view that we must transform the domestic structure of all countries with which we deal, even if the foreign policy of those countries is otherwise moving in a more acceptable direction, then we will find ourselves massively involved in every country in the world. ... I cannot in good conscience recommend as a principle of American foreign policy that our entire foreign policy should be made dependent on that particular aspect of the domestic structure of the Soviet Union.¹⁸

The administration's attitude toward change within the Soviet system and the U.S. role in attempting to encourage change eventually angered the Congress, which enacted the Jackson-Vanik amendment over Kissinger's objections. Later, President Carter, in his human rights crusade, pursued a much more active policy of attempting to influence the Soviet domestic order. Carter's shift to a "harder" position on this issue did not, however, go so far as to lead to his advocacy of the overthrow of the Soviet government, as in the earlier termination thinking. Indeed, Carter often stated that his objective was merely to encourage the Soviet government to adhere to international agreements such as the Final Act of the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), which it had freely signed.

¹⁷Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1957, pp. 357-358.

¹⁸Richard M. Nixon, *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970s: A New Strategy for Peace* (Report to the Congress), February 18, 1970, p. 157; "Nomination of Henry A. Kissinger," *Hearings* before the Committee on Foreign Relations, 93d Cong., 1st Sess., September 20, 1973.

The Difficulty of Splitting Regime and People

Kennan's critique of the policy of attempting to deal with the Soviet people over the heads of the government, characteristically, was originally made from neither a hawkish nor a dovish perspective, but from recognition that U.S. options were severely limited in this regard. At a time when officials in Washington were discussing extending humanitarian aid to the Soviet Union, Kennan opposed such measures on the grounds that regime and people were too inextricably linked to be the targets of separate policies:

When a people found itself under the control of a strongly authoritarian regime, and especially one hostilely inclined to the United States, there was very little that Americans could do to help them, it occurred to me, without helping the regime to which they were subject. If economic assistance were to be extended, say in the form of consumer goods, the regime would first impugn our motives; then it would turn to the people and say: "Who but we could have been clever enough to get this aid for you from the wicked imperialists?" And finally it would simply divert to its own purposes an equivalent volume of resources which it would otherwise have had to make available to the people, leaving the total allocation to the civilian sector exactly what it would otherwise have been. If, on the other hand, we tried to bring injury to the regime, by means of economic pressure of one sort or another, the regime would simply find means to pass this injury on to the civilian population, using it as proof both of foreign hostility to the people themselves and of the indispensability of its own protection and authority.¹⁹

Clearly, beginning in the early fifties U.S. policymakers began to accept, implicitly if not explicitly, Kennan's view that splitting regime from people was not a substitute for a policy toward the Soviet government, even if in the course of dealing with that government U.S. policy made it more unlikely that the Soviet populace would revolt against its leaders. Eisenhower, for example, recalls in his memoirs how at the time of Stalin's death, when U.S. officials were debating the wording of an appropriate American statement, Dulles "had some reservations about making any statement at all in the circumstances—it would be a gamble, he thought, because it might be read as an appeal to the Soviet people in mourning to rise up against their rulers,"²⁰ even though Dulles' rhetoric, particularly that of the 1952 campaign, would have led one to expect that he would have welcomed a popular uprising in the Soviet Union. Choosing to improve relations with the Soviet government over supporting the Soviet people against the government has since become the preferred

¹⁹Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, pp. 274-275.

²⁰Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, N.Y., 1963, p. 144.

management approach, although here, as the Carter case above illustrates, there are differences between administrations and individuals.

Personal Relations

In line with his views of the sources of U.S.-USSR conflict, Kennan thought that the effect of personal contact on the attitudes and policies of the Soviet leaders was severely limited. He saw no possibility of talking out fundamental differences between the two countries. He also confessed to having developed during his years in the embassy in Moscow "a deep skepticism about the absolute value of people-to-people contacts for the improvement of international relations."²¹ American and Russian attitudes and preconceptions were so different, he believed, that close personal contacts generally increased rather than decreased mutual suspicion and mistrust.

As termination by victory and termination by accommodation gave way to a management approach in U.S.-Soviet relations, most U.S. leaders adopted at least some of Kennan's skepticism about personal contacts, avoiding either the extreme hopes that the Roosevelt administration had had for ties with Stalin, or the extreme suspiciousness that later developed, for example, with Acheson, about all contact with Soviet officials. Since the Cuban missile crisis, most American leaders have attached a modest importance to summit level contacts, not as a way of resolving basic differences but of lessening misunderstandings that might lead to war. President Johnson thought that a meeting with the Soviet leaders would be desirable, because he believed that Khrushchev's misperception of President Kennedy had led him to risk putting nuclear weapons in Cuba. Nixon claimed that his conversation with Brezhnev at San Clemente, in which he voiced his strong feelings on the Middle East, played an important role in ensuring that Brezhnev later did not misinterpret U.S. interests during the 1973 war.

Kissinger and Nixon, moreover, made a conscious effort to insulate the U.S.-USSR relationship from the vagaries of personal feelings. Nixon came to office with memories of his meetings with the Soviet leadership during the Khrushchev period, in which he saw the Soviet "inferiority complex" as a hindrance to improving relations. He and Kissinger felt that if they treated the Russians as equals on a personal level, there would be less prospect of personal animosities interfering with matters of substance. As Nixon remarked to Kissinger during the 1972 summit,

²¹Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, pp. 276-277.

There is no question that the Russian leaders do not have as much of an inferiority complex as was the case in Khrushchev's period. They do not have to brag about everything in Russia being better than anything anywhere else in the world. But they still crave to be respected as equals, and on this point I think we made a good impression.²²

Negotiation

American attitudes toward negotiations with the Soviet Union were largely shaped during the early postwar period by the experience of discussions with Stalin and Molotov concerning the conduct of the war and postwar plans for Germany and Eastern Europe. As noted above, attitudes toward these negotiations quickly became polarized. Initially, the Roosevelt and Truman administrations hoped to use their discussions with Stalin to persuade the Soviet leader to allow free elections in Eastern Europe. Later, as Soviet intentions in the region became apparent, the debate over negotiations took on bitter tones as the public and leaders became convinced that the Soviets had broken the previous agreements concluded at Yalta and Potsdam. Negotiations with such an untrustworthy partner were believed futile and could only damage Western interests.

Kennan was generally more cautious in his assessment of what negotiations could and could not be expected to accomplish. He never believed that negotiations could lead to freedom for Eastern Europe. No amount of skill in negotiating could transform a weak bargaining position into a strong one, and he felt the U.S. position in Eastern Europe was fundamentally weak. With the Red Army occupying the region, there was little short of war that could prevent Stalin from bringing it under Soviet control. Consequently, Kennan recommended that the United States recognize, at least de facto, the Soviet sphere of influence, but that it not engage in negotiations that he thought would only confer a measure of approval of what the Soviets were going to undertake in any case.

Several years later, however, when Americans became greatly disillusioned with the process of negotiation, Kennan was one of few to argue in favor of continued U.S.-Soviet talks. Although he remained skeptical about negotiating on such broad questions as the fate of Eastern Europe, he favored talks leading to highly specific agreements on matters of mutual interest. As he comments in his *Memoirs*,

For the Russians, and for Stalin in particular, there were agreements and agreements, just as there were negotiations and negotiations.

²²Nixon, RN: *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, Grosset & Dunlap Inc., New York, 1978, p. 619.

Highly specific agreements, relating to military dispositions and control over territory, were more likely to be respected by them than vague subscriptions to high moral principles. Agreements founded in an obvious and concrete Soviet interest of a political and military nature were more likely to be respected than ones based on an appeal to international legal norms or to the decisions of multilateral international bodies. Agreements negotiated quietly and privately, respecting realistic political understandings rather than public contractual obligations, were more apt to be respected by Moscow, so long as the other party also respected them, than were agreements arrived at in negotiations conducted in the public eye (the Russians called these *demonstrativnye* negotiations) where the aim was, or appeared to be, to put the other party in a bad light before world public opinion.²³

Because of his modest expectations of success in negotiations with the Soviets, Kennan was critical of the positions of strength approach. His dispute with Acheson over this matter has already been noted. Later Kissinger echoed this theme, contending that an unrealistic obsession with attaining a certain absolute level of strength (never clearly defined in any case) after which negotiations would finally become possible had only squandered the 10 or 15 years during which the United States' relative strength was at its peak.

In the 1950s, support for Kennan's views on negotiations came from realist critics such as Hans Morgenthau, who argued that all nations, not just the Soviet Union, broke agreements that ran patently counter to their own national interests. Successful agreements survived, Morgenthau contended, not because of the virtue of their adherents but because they had a self-enforcing character; for all parties, breaking an agreement had to prove more costly than continued adherence. As Morgenthau noted,

the real issue posed by the frequent violations of international agreements by the Soviet Union is not whether the Soviet government is inherently, by some kind of natural depravity, oblivious of legal obligations, but whether the conception of the Russian national interest which gave rise to those violations is compatible with the national interest of the United States. This is not a contest between virtue and vice, defined in the terms of a lawyer's code of conduct, but a clash between the foreign policies of two great powers pursuing apparently incompatible objectives. The test, therefore, of whether a negotiated settlement with the Soviet Union is possible is to be sought not through the lawyer's concern with legal obligations, but through the statesman's concern with the reconciliation of apparently irreconcilable national interests.²⁴

²³Kennan, *Memoirs: 1950-1963*, pp. 50-51.

²⁴Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest*, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., New York, 1951, pp. 145-146.

The question as to whether negotiations with the Soviets were desirable was not one of whether the Soviet Union could be trusted but whether there existed areas of mutual interest between the United States and the USSR that could be identified and then made explicit.

The critical attitude toward negotiations that Kennan and Morgenthau advocated has since gained wide acceptance among U.S. foreign policy elites, where few individuals any longer expect negotiations to lead to the resolution of fundamental political conflicts, or, conversely, to be of no value at all in managing the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Despite the broad consensus that has emerged, however, there are still deep differences between hard and soft managers on the matter of negotiations. These have been particularly evident in regard to SALT.

The SALT process and reports of possible or potential violations of arms control agreements lent a new currency to the old debate over whether the Soviets could be trusted, and thus whether it was proper for administrations to negotiate agreements with them. Officials from the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations countered by claiming that SALT was not an exercise in mutual trust but an attempt to reach agreement on the basis of mutual interests. In such an agreement, administration spokesmen contended, there could be no winners or losers, because neither side would sacrifice its vital interests in the course of a negotiation. As Henry Kissinger stated in a press conference following the conclusion of SALT I, "we have approached these negotiations . . . with the attitude that a wise proposal is one that is conceived by each side to be in the mutual interest, and we believe that if this agreement does what we hope it will, that the future will record that both sides won."²⁵

Functional Interdependencies

Consistent with his view that the U.S.-Soviet conflict was by nature long term, Kennan did not expect functional interdependencies such as trade and arms control to lead to fundamental breakthroughs by one side or another. On one hand, he argued against the view held by Harry Hopkins and later by Henry Wallace that complementarity of economic interests would ensure U.S.-Soviet harmony in the postwar period. On the other hand, he was skeptical that embargoes and boycotts would be effective in extracting political concessions from the Soviet leaders. The Soviet Union, he believed, was to a great extent autarkic, and economic ties would be of limited effect either in inducing or compelling its leaders to comply with American desires.

²⁵May 26, 1972, quoted in U.S. Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior*, p. 484.

By the late fifties, most U.S. leaders had adopted Kennan's view that functional interdependencies could not lead to fundamental breakthroughs, although they could be of some use in the overall management of the U.S.-Soviet relationship. The Kennedy and Johnson administrations hoped to use trade as a way of "bridge building." This policy aimed, indirectly, at loosening the Soviet grip on Eastern Europe as well as softening Soviet attitudes. Bridge building did not, however, attempt to challenge the stability of the Soviet regime itself or what the architects of the policy saw as vital Soviet security interests.

Under Kissinger and Nixon, there was an attempt to link U.S. willingness to develop functional ties such as strategic arms control, trade, credits, and most-favored-nation status to Soviet behavior in such areas as Vietnam and the Middle East. Nixon saw these ties as useful for creating a short- to medium-term calculus of costs and benefits for the Soviet leadership. Only secondarily, if at all, did he think of trade as useful in "leavening" the Soviet system. He stated,

These summit agreements began the establishment of a pattern of inter-relationships and cooperation in a number of different areas. This was the first stage of detente: to involve Soviet interests in ways that would increase their stake in international stability and the status quo. There was no thought that such commercial, technical and scientific relationships could by themselves prevent confrontations or wars, but at least they would have to be counted in a balance sheet of gains and losses whenever the Soviets were tempted to indulge in international adventurism.²⁶

Similarly, Brzezinski endorsed these objectives, but hoped that U.S.-Soviet cooperative ventures would also "induce in the Soviet elite a less doctrinal perspective on the American-Soviet relationship, a perspective that would be more responsive to the increasingly interdependent character of global politics."²⁷ Although Brzezinski's hope goes somewhat beyond Nixon's, the modest amount of change expected still contrasts with the earlier termination by accommodation view that trade can somehow transform the Soviet system as a whole.

Integration of the Soviet Union into the International System

As noted above, Kennan was skeptical of efforts to integrate the Soviet Union into the international system by involving the USSR in a United Nations Organization. "I was not," he later recalled, "averse to the establishment of a new world organization per se."²⁸ But, he argued,

²⁶Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, p. 618.

²⁷Brzezinski, "U.S.-Soviet Relations," pp. 131-132.

²⁸Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, p. 219.

an international organization for preservation of the peace and security cannot take the place of a well-conceived and realistic foreign policy. The more we ignore politics in our absorption with the erection of a legalistic system for the preservation of the status quo, the sooner and the more violently that system will be broken to pieces under the realities of international life.²⁹

He was concerned that expectations in the United States for the UN would be greatly disappointed when it was realized that the international organization was ineffective—as he was certain it would be—in stopping the Soviets from gaining control of Eastern Europe.

Kennan was also skeptical about the wisdom of attempting to involve the Soviet Union in efforts to solve what later would come to be called “world order” problems. He argued that inviting the Soviet Union to participate in efforts to reconstruct and to build the postwar economic order would simply give the Soviets opportunities to frustrate these objectives. Kennan decried

the extent to which things were being held up in deference to the chimera of Soviet collaboration. I had in mind, among other things, the United Nations Relief and Reconstruction Agency (UNRRA) operations, [the IMF], and [the World Bank]. . . . The motives for which the Russians might be expected to interest themselves in UNRRA would have little in common, it seemed to me, with the general altruistic interest in European reconstruction with which our people were motivated. . . .³⁰

The view that this type of problem could be solved without Soviet participation was at the time heretical; the great fear of the Roosevelt administration was “unilateralism,” and the administration believed that lasting solutions required Soviet participation.

Horizontal and Vertical Aspects of the Conflict

It has been noted how for the Roosevelt administration, the Soviet challenge took the form of exploitation of vertical conflicts in local settings—of efforts to subvert legitimate governments in order to impose a communist system. In contrast, NSC 68 saw the Soviet challenge as a horizontal one, directed at the external security of the United States and its allies, and only secondarily at their internal orders. The challenge was largely military, and included the possibility of direct military attack on Western positions. There were elements of truth in each of these assessments of the Soviet threat, and in his outline of the policy of containment, Kennan combined elements of both, while arguing against either view if taken in its pure

²⁹Ibid., p. 218.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 256-257.

form. Although he did not believe that the Soviets would risk all-out war, he shared in part the horizontalist view that the Soviets would use their military power to exert intimidating pressures on their periphery and beyond. At the same time, he accepted in part the verticalist view that the Soviets would exploit internal dissatisfactions in other countries and encourage local communist takeovers. As a result of this assessment of the threat, Kennan advocated a mix of both the military containment of the Soviet Union and of efforts to build up the strength of potential targets of communist subversion.

To the extent that subsequent American foreign policy has addressed both these needs—internal subversion and external aggression—it has adopted Kennan's mixed view.

SOVIET IMPERIALISM AND GENUINE REVOLUTION

The adoption of this kind of broad consensus on the dual nature of the threat has given rise, however, to a new set of cleavages between hard and soft management attitudes. Despite a general consensus on the need to counter both the horizontal and the vertical dimensions of the Soviet challenge, the problem still remains that of distinguishing Soviet actions from actions by third parties that do not originate with the Soviets.

This is the problem of distinguishing between what Hans Morgenthau called "genuine revolution" and "revolution as an instrument of Russian imperialism." As Morgenthau wrote in 1951,

the greatest danger that threatens us in the immediate future, aside from the military preponderance of the Soviet Union on land, is the confusion of the two great issues of our time: Russian imperialism and genuine revolution.

We must be strong enough to resist aggression and wise enough to accommodate foreign interests which do not impinge upon our own. Revolution which is but the spearhead and product of foreign imperialism must be dealt with as imperialism, that is, by military force. Against genuine revolution only the health of our, and our allies', social institutions can insure.³¹

In general, the hard managers have a tendency to associate all conflict and violence with Soviet intervention. Carried to its logical extreme, this view denies altogether the reality of genuine revolution. An example would be one of Ronald Reagan's pre-election comments: "Let's not delude ourselves. The Soviet Union underlies all the unrest

³¹Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest*, p. 88.

that is going on. If they weren't engaged in this game of dominoes, there wouldn't be any hotspots in the world."³²

The soft managers, in contrast, have been more apt to downplay the importance of Soviet intervention, and to claim that this intervention is usually a response to opportunities presented by unresolved local conflicts. According to this view, which is typified by Cyrus Vance, Marshall Shulman, Andrew Young, and to some extent Jimmy Carter, Third World instability, which arises mainly out of indigenous causes, leads to the involvement of the superpowers. Shulman, for example, while acknowledging that the Soviet Union is "not a status quo power" and that its long-term ambition is to supplant the United States as a world power, believes that the Soviets are capable of enough restraint to enable agreement on certain "ground rules" between the two sides. These would minimize the possibility of miscalculation on either side, and help to limit superpower involvement in locally generated conflicts. In Shulman's words,

But also to be noted [in addition to U.S.-Soviet rivalry] on the political plane of the relationship are some elements of cooperation. In the Middle East, which both sides have recognized as an area of imminent danger, the political competition is accompanied by consultation and a substantial degree of restraint to reduce the danger of their direct involvement with each other. There have also been consultations and tacit cooperation in regard to Southeast Asia and Berlin, in which the Soviet Union balanced relations with its allies against larger considerations.³³

This view was shared to some extent by Jimmy Carter, who remarked, concerning a potential conflict in Africa,

I might say that in the Libyan-Egyptian conflict that's recently taken place, and which has now been changed into a peaceful relationship for the time being at least, both ourselves and the Soviets have deliberately shown complete constraint and restraint in our comments or actions in that area. We want to confine these conflicts, when they unfortunately do occur, to as narrowly geographical an area as possible and prevent them being identified as a struggle between ourselves and the Soviet Union.³⁴

An intermediate view would be one that neither denies altogether the reality of genuine revolution, nor exaggerates the Soviet willingness to cooperate with the United States in promoting international

³²Interview with Karen House, *The Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 1980.

³³Marshall D. Shulman, "Toward a Western Philosophy of Coexistence," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 52, No. 1, October 1973, p. 37.

³⁴News conference of July 28, 1977, transcript in Department of State, *Bulletin*, August 22, 1977, p. 222.

stability. This is, in fact, the view of those such as Brzezinski, who do not assign blame to the Soviets for all local upheaval, but who also stress the Soviets' responsibility not to exploit existing situations:

In my judgement the real threat to the future is not that the world will someday be painted a single color—red—under a single flag—that of the Soviet Union. I don't think the Soviet Union has either the ideological capacity or the economic power or even the military resources to impose global domination. I think the real danger to today's world is that the conflicting aspirations of man will create massive global chaos and frustration.

I am fearful that the Soviets might be tempted to exploit this in a shortsighted fashion to complicate these difficulties.³⁵

Brzezinski has also taken the view that it is by no means axiomatic that "genuine revolution" necessarily serves Soviet interests and that over the long run the national, religious, and economic aspirations of most peoples and nations will work against the monolithic Soviet vision of the world.

³⁵"The World According to Brzezinski," *New York Times Magazine*, December 31, 1978.

V. CONCLUSIONS: MANAGEMENT AND THE PROBLEM OF CONSENSUS

This report has outlined three alternative views of U.S.-Soviet rivalry as they emerged in the early postwar period. It has shown how these sharply conflicting views gradually converged on a broad consensus regarding the need for a strategy of management rather than of termination. Finally, it has shown how within this management consensus, there have developed hard and soft variants, with their respective roots in the earlier termination schools of thought.

At numerous points in the discussion it has been seen how despite the acceptance of a management strategy, termination of one sort or the other continues to appeal to U.S. leaders. In this concluding section, the report will analyze some of the implications of the continued tension between termination and management in the American foreign policy debate. In particular, this section will analyze two factors that account, in part, for the continued influence of termination thinking in the debate. These are the nature of public debate in the United States and the nature of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry itself.

MANAGEMENT AND THE PUBLIC DEBATE

About the same time that officials were moving toward accepting a strategy for long-term management, academics were producing a body of literature that debated the requirements for a national strategy for dealing effectively with the challenge posed by an ambiguous, long-term rivalry with a hostile power. The work of Hans Morgenthau has already been mentioned. Another scholar who attempted to think through this problem was Henry Kissinger, whose *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* appeared in 1957. Kissinger's writings are of interest for the light they shed on his later policies. These policies are in turn of interest for the way in which they were greeted by the elite and the general public.

Kissinger argued that the question of whether or not U.S.-Soviet rivalry was soluble was logically prior to, rather than a derivative of, the question of the appropriateness of hawkish or dovish views. Kissinger was outlining, in effect, the need for a policy *explicitly* based on long-term management. In arguing this point, he was implicitly criticizing the policies of John Foster Dulles. These policies, although thoroughly hawkish in tone by any definition, had also been predicat-

ed on the assumption that the rivalry could be terminated—following the transformation of the Soviet domestic order that Dulles expected and that he hoped to hasten by his own policies. Kissinger noted that it was against the background of these hardline views that Dulles' approach quickly gave way, after the Geneva Summit, to a euphoria over the fundamental "change" that was presumed to have occurred in Soviet thinking:¹

[We] have conducted our relations with the Soviet bloc, whether military or diplomatic, as if it were possible to conceive of a terminal date to the conflict. Many of our pronouncements have given rise to the notion that an over-all diplomatic settlement is at least conceivable, and much of our military thought centers around the possibility of victory in an all-out war, which would put an end to international tensions once and for all.²

More than a decade later, when he himself became a leading policy-maker, Kissinger attempted, much along the lines of his earlier writings, to explicitly treat Soviet relations as a problem of managing a long-term relationship, rather than as part of a "winnable" contest in which one side or another could achieve victory. In this sense, detente for Kissinger was not so much a new departure in policy as it was an attempt to bring perceptions—elite and mass—into line with realities. He hoped thereby to create a new consensus in both the elite and the public on the problem of dealing with the Soviet Union. This would eliminate the violent swings in attitudes toward the USSR that he had seen as characteristic of U.S. elite and mass opinion, and that he had seen as a hindrance to effective policymaking.

In retrospect, it is clear that Kissinger failed in this effort to build a consensus. Whether this was because his own particular approach to management—what came to be called detente—was fundamentally flawed, as its critics argued, or whether his policies never received a fair trial because of Watergate and the domestic turmoil of the Vietnam era, as Kissinger himself would claim, is not a question that can be settled here.

Whatever the reasons, however, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the effect of detente as a policy on American attitudes was the precise opposite of what Kissinger had hoped. Clearly it was divisive. Moreover, in the debates that detente engendered, many of the emotional appeals of the termination schools of thought were given a new currency. On one hand, detente raised unrealistically high expectations both in the public and in segments of the foreign policy elite, where it was felt that U.S.-Soviet relations might be moving into a

¹"The Soviet leaders are scrapping 30 years of policy based on violence and intolerance." Dulles, Press Release No. 92, February 25, 1956, quoted in Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 321-323.

²Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons*, p. 359.

qualitatively new stage—if not to the kind of accommodation President Roosevelt envisioned, then perhaps at least to a permanent transcendence of the more dangerous aspects of U.S.-Soviet rivalry as it had existed since 1945. On the other hand, critics of Kissinger's policies argued that detente was little more than a tactical ruse, part of a Kremlin strategy to buy time and to disarm the West before it moved in for a "winning" blow. As the attacks on their policy mounted, Kissinger and Nixon responded by overselling its benefits. In the process they both fed hopes for the kind of termination by accommodation that Kissinger himself had always argued was illusory and further alienated the critics of detente who had been unimpressed by even its more modest benefits.

The ensuing resurgence of termination rhetoric in the debate over detente raises questions that go beyond the merits and demerits of U.S. policy in the seventies and touch on the fundamental problem, already posed by Tocqueville, of how democracies respond to external challenges. If, as this report has sought to demonstrate, U.S. policymakers came to accept the need to manage the rivalry with the Soviet Union, there was nothing to prevent individuals outside the government from formulating their positions on foreign policy as if termination were a feasible option for U.S. policymakers. From the mid-fifties, although official policy was formulated in terms of management, individuals outside government—many of whom are past or prospective government officials—continued to raise the specter of termination. They did so either by developing doomsday scenarios for world domination by the Soviets, by preparing U.S. counteroffensives designed to knock the Soviets out of the game once and for all, or, on the dovish end of the spectrum, by calling for an accommodation with the USSR that would put an end to the rivalry.

This kind of interjection of termination rhetoric into the debate on policy toward the Soviet Union has often resulted in a wide gap between pre-election rhetoric and performance in office, or, conversely, between performance in office and rhetoric once out of office. The fate of the 1952 Republican campaign pledges regarding "rollback" and "liberation" has been noted. The same gap between rhetoric and performance is evident in the case of former President Nixon. Although his administration prided itself on building what it called a "stable structure of peace"—a framework in which U.S.-USSR competition could continue with minimum risk of nuclear war—once out of office Nixon characterized the U.S.-Soviet conflict as a "real war," in which there could be "no substitute for victory":

To meet the challenge to our own survival and to the survival of freedom and peace, we must . . . develop a strategy aimed not just at avoiding defeat but at attaining victory.³

³Richard M. Nixon, *The Real War*, Warner Books, New York, 1980, pp. 15-16.

We need a defensive strategy in the short term to counter these Soviet thrusts. We also need a forward strategy for the longer term. Soviet strategy is not defensive; it is designed to secure victory. The only answer to a strategy of victory on the Soviet side is a strategy of victory for the West.⁴

Because of the nature of debate within a democracy, it would seem that those individuals responsible for formulating policy toward the Soviet Union should analyze how their policies—and their rhetoric—affect public perceptions. As the case of the Kissinger-Nixon detente illustrates, policymakers should seek to avoid a situation in which their policies, although explicitly based on an acceptance of the need for long-term management, raise hopes and fears concerning termination, which then undermine public support for administration policies.

U.S.-SOVIET RIVALRY AND CHANGES IN THE STATUS QUO

In addition to the momentum of the public debate, another factor that encourages the continued influence of termination thinking on U.S. attitudes is the nature of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry itself. Although, as this report has stressed, the current U.S.-Soviet rivalry is likely to continue for the long term, this rivalry is by no means stagnant. Changes in respective rates of economic and technological progress, developments in the Third World, changes in relations with important allies, leadership changes, and a host of other factors provide a complex background against which an otherwise stable U.S.-Soviet contest is played out. Against this changing background, there is an inevitable tendency on the U.S. side (as on the Soviet) to assess changes in the "correlation of forces"—to ask "who's winning."

Over the past 35 years, there have been periods in which one or the other power is seen to be "gaining" over the other. Walt Rostow thought in terms of communist offensives and American counteroffensives.⁵ Brzezinski developed a chronology of "how the cold war was played," in which he distinguished periods such as "premature Soviet globalism," the "cresting of American globalism," and "the shaping of a mixed relationship."⁶ Kissinger saw his main

⁴Ibid., p. 297.

⁵Rostow, "The Third Round," pp. 1-10.

⁶Brzezinski, "How the Cold War Was Played," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 1, October 1972, pp. 181-209.

challenge as one of coping with the rising military power of the Soviet Union. At present there is much speculation about a "window of opportunity" that will open up for the Soviets in the early eighties, and then close again toward the end of the decade.

Although scholars and political elites can argue about the details, nearly all would agree with the fundamental point that there are cyclical changes in the relationship that in turn affect elite attitudes. United States leaders have neither been immune to surges of historical optimism, in which hopes arise for cutting back certain Soviet gains, nor have they been immune to periods of historical pessimism, in which there is a widespread fear that the USSR is "winning." In short, in the course of managing the U.S.-Soviet rivalry, the United States moves through periods of—to borrow Pierre Hassner's terms—"status quo plus" and "status quo minus."⁷

"Peaceful engagement" and "bridge building" were the policies of a status quo power, but one with aspirations toward what Hassner would call a status quo plus situation. Although by the early sixties, Dulles' rhetoric about rollback and liberation had given way to a recognition that the Soviet Union had "legitimate security interests" in Eastern Europe that it was in the American interest to respect, U.S. elites continued to think in terms of whittling down existing Soviet positions. Ostensibly carried out in the name of promoting world peace (by indirectly working toward a settlement of the German problem), in terms of U.S.-Soviet rivalry bridge building had offensive, status quo plus objectives. It aimed at a settlement in Eastern Europe, but one that drew a distinction between Soviet military security and Soviet concerns about retaining ideological control in that area.

Bridge building ended, of course, with the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and less than ten years later Helmut Sonnenfeldt was discussing what could only be called a status quo minus solution for Eastern Europe.⁸ Both the status quo minus and the status quo plus approaches to Eastern Europe took as their point of departure a management, no-victory approach to U.S.-Soviet relations; they did so, however, in periods of widely different expectations on the part of American officials.

Detente under Kissinger was the policy of a status quo power, but

⁷Pierre Hassner, *Change and Security in Europe*, Parts I and II, Adelphi Papers No. 45 and No. 49, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1968-1969.

⁸The point here is not that Sonnenfeldt had any desire, as he has been accused of having, to attempt to sell out Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union. Rather, he was attempting to grapple with the problem of U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe in a period in which the "correlation of forces" had shifted against the United States. Sonnenfeldt's remarks were made at a London meeting of U.S. ambassadors, and one version was published in a syndicated column by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak in March 1976.

one in a sense resigned to a status quo minus situation. By the 1970s, it was clear that the Soviet Union was benefiting from its own newly found strengths (military power and leadership stability) and from American difficulties (Vietnam, Watergate, and OPEC). By this time, detente had ceased to be a policy aimed at challenging Soviet positions by limited measures and became a strategy for managing, as Kissinger and his advisers saw it, a relationship with an emerging superpower.⁹

The relatively abrupt swing over the last 15 years from the position of status quo plus confronted by the Kennedy administration to the status quo minus situation faced by Nixon could conceivably be reversed in as short, if not shorter, a period of time. In concrete terms, the Soviets could confront continuing problems in Afghanistan and Poland, economic stagnation at home, and a potentially debilitating succession crisis, while the United States moved into a period in which it had begun to solve its energy problems, was deploying major new weapons systems, and had begun to rebuild a domestic foreign policy consensus and with it an increased executive authority.

The object in this context is not to assess Soviet or U.S. prospects for the future. Two points need to be underscored, however: first, that a new upswing for the United States is possible, and second, that U.S. leaders are likely, should it occur, to be unprepared to take advantage of the change. Historically, U.S. policy has shown a consistent inability to translate periods of relative strength into enduring gains—gains that might then make it easier for this country to deal with the Soviet challenge on the next upswing of assertiveness. In the fifties, Kissinger and others were highly critical of what they saw as an American failure to translate overwhelming superiority in the immediate post-war period into a favorable settlement of the outstanding territorial and political issues in Europe. Similarly, during the sixties, in the aftermath of the Soviet defeat in Cuba, the United States was unable to convert the status quo plus into the kind of permanent foreign policy gains that the architects of bridge building envisioned. One of the reasons for this failure, in both cases, was the resurgence of termination thinking and the role it played in diverting the attention of

⁹Perhaps the most notable codification of the new rationale for detente was offered by Helmut Sonnenfeldt: "the Soviet Union remains the single most powerful state in the world besides ourselves. Its power continues to grow and its interests to expand. Indeed, it can be said that in the broad sweep of history, Soviet Russia is only just beginning its truly 'imperial' phase: its military forces have acquired intercontinental reach only fairly recently; its capacity to influence events in remote areas is of relatively recent standing; and it is only just acquiring the habit of defining its interests on a global rather than a solely continental basis. For us, therefore, the problem is that of building viable relationships with an emerging world power." "The Meaning of 'Detente,'" *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Summer 1975, pp. 3-4.

policymakers from formulating limited and attainable status quo plus goals.

At present, there are indications that at least some U.S. policymakers perceive the USSR as moving into a potentially status quo minus situation—one with status quo plus possibilities for the United States. Although they are careful to stress that the Soviet Union still remains a formidable power militarily, President Reagan and Secretary of State Haig have both begun to speak, in light of Soviet economic difficulties and the situation in Poland, of the coming decline of the Soviet Union and/or of communism. According to Haig,

From a historic point of view there are a number of indicators which suggest some fundamental systemic failures: failures with respect to levels of production in the Soviet Union, failures in the agricultural sector, worrisome signs in the future with respect to raw materials, energy, demographic problems. All of these things are clearly signs on the horizon today, which in historic terms—not in contemporary terms—will have an impact on the future evolution of the Marxist-Leninist system in the Soviet model.¹⁰

Even more dramatic is Reagan's assessment:

The years ahead are great ones for this country, for the cause of freedom and the spread of civilization. The West won't contain communism, it will transcend communism. It won't bother to dismiss or denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written.¹¹

As can be seen in these statements, particularly that of President Reagan, there is a fine line between describing a situation with status quo plus possibilities and slipping into the rhetoric of termination by victory. If there is a lesson to be learned from the past, however, it is that the latter rhetoric may well confuse and alienate the public, especially if it is based on premises that prove illusory in the long run. Equally important, while the policymaker awaits the collapse of the entire Soviet system, such talk can distract him from concentrating on certain attainable status quo plus objectives. (Such objectives attained in the past might include the Austrian State Treaty of 1955 or the preservation of Yugoslavia's independent status.)

Concentration on limited, attainable objectives—and here the situation in Poland obviously comes to mind—is warranted not only because such objectives may be worthwhile in their own right, but because they would, if attained, place the United States and its allies in a better position to cope with a new upsurge of Soviet strength—or of U.S. weakness—which, given the long-term nature of U.S.-Soviet rivalry, there is every reason to expect may yet be in store.

¹⁰"An Interview with the Secretary of State," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 9, 1981.

¹¹Address at the University of Notre Dame, May 17, 1981, in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, May 25, 1981.

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For 35 years the Soviet Union has presented American political leaders with their most pressing foreign policy problem. Throughout this period the Soviet Union, like other countries, has undergone constant change. Although this change has worked to reshape the perceptions of American leaders, it has not ended an ongoing debate in the United States about the "essential" character of the Soviet system. This in turn has made consensus on a long-term strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union difficult to achieve. In an effort to probe the roots of the ongoing dissension in the U.S. foreign policy community, this report analyzes the three early postwar alternatives--termination by accommodation, termination by victory, and long-term management--and shows how the early debates on these alternatives influenced later American thinking. In addition, the report suggests some of the underlying reasons why termination appealed to those who were confronted for the first time with the Soviet problem, and why, despite the standoff of the past 35 years, termination continues to exert a residual appeal with elites and with the general public. 71 pp. (Author)

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